

Love and Hate

1914


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LOVE AND HATE

AS foreman in the works, he was outside the region of chaff, excepting when the younger directors encountered him: the rest of the staff took care to make any comments on his public behaviour aside and privately. One or two of the senior hands still called him Teddy, the juniors addressed him as Mr. Apps; the new timekeeper gave a military salute and said "Sir." An alert soldierly man, the new timekeeper: very sharp on his duties, and keeping the wooden box just inside the entrance gates spick and span. Mr. Apps honoured him on the afternoon before the annual dinner with a word of praise. The general temper of the works was for the moment good, and men became friendly who had in the past been estranged on questions of politics, horse racing, the future life, finances.

“If any one asks for me,” ordered Mr. Apps, “say I’ve gone over to the Navigators’ Arms, just to make sure everything’s all right for this evening.” A less tactful man, than the new timekeeper would have made some humorous retort: he contented himself with bringing the right hand sharply to his temple. “Shan’t be ten minutes at the outside.”

The hotel gave signs of confusion, and this was natural in all the circumstances. Early scents of cooking were in the air; maids scurried to and fro responding to the instructions of the lady whose name figured over the porch as one licensed to do many things not permitted to ordinary folk; two waiters, hired specially, were setting out long tables in the club-room; the bar-maid arranged flowers there. A few riverside men in the public bar waited to be served with the patience of folk who recognize that impossibilities cannot be performed.

“Can you spare half a minute, Mrs. Williams?”

“To tell you the truth,” answered the proprietress, going on briskly, “I can’t!”

Mr. Apps followed her along the passage that led to the kitchen. “I’ve been entrusted, ma’am;

with the delicate task of proposing your health to-night, and I was wondering whether there was anything you'd like me——"

"Cut it as short as you can," recommended the lady, "and not too much of the melted butter. Maria, has the celery arrived yet?"

"I was in hopes of having a quiet talk with you."

"Some other time, Mr. Apps."

He turned and went as a privileged man into the room at the back of the bar. No one was there, and taking some slips of paper from his jacket he read them, his lips moving silently; now and again he raised his right arm to emphasize a sentence. "I think it's pretty correct," he said. Glancing along the mantelpiece, he observed a new photograph amongst the crowd of frames and vases. "She's been and had herself took again," said Mr. Apps, in an enraptured way. He pressed the picture to his lips; a concert of coughs reminded him that the mirror was visible from the public bar.

A good deal of washing that night, when the six o'clock bell rang, and, with the workmen, soft soap was in demand, and testy inquiries made

regarding the whereabouts of clean collars. Mr. Apps shaved, using a tablet of pink soap, specially bought ; the paper cover announced that it was of the quality used by all the Principal Ladies of the Stage ; their tastes were evidently in favour of a determined perfume. He put on a white dickey of the kind that is only to be found in certain shops of the outer districts ; you would ask for it in vain at Burlington Arcade. His best waistcoat had a rather extensive open space, and the dickey bulged out at one side, and, being adjusted there, emerged at the other side. Mr. Apps, leaving nothing to chance, pinned it at three points to his flannel-shirt. Contemplating the ultimate result in the piece of looking-glass that leaned on the washstand, he thought, and said aloud, that he had come as near to perfection as was possible to mortal man.

The Navigators' Arms could not spare an apartment to be used as a reception-room ; fortunately the night was fine, and at half-past six the guests began to assemble outside. An air of constraint was evident : some of this was due to the fact that, clothed in their best, the men could not afford to lean comfortably against

window-sills or the water trough. Children came up to stare at the notable sight ; a few of the hotel's regular customers stood away near the quay with a touch of resentment at this interruption to settled customs. Mr. Apps arrived ; the workmen made an avenue. A motor car came, and Mr. Apps, waving every one aside, took charge, of the task of opening the door, assisted the owner to alight, helped him to take off a heavy overcoat, escorted him to the Navigators' Arms ; the expression of the foreman's features showed that he recognized the importance of the occasion, indicated, too, that he felt well aware no one else could perform the duties in a proper and adequate manner. The men remarked to each other that Apps was in his element.

" Mrs. Williams," with authority in the voice, " this is our chairman for this evening. Sir Francis, this is the young woman who runs this hotel, and who is going to give us something to eat this evening."

" A plain dinner, I hope," said Sir Francis.

" Plain," agreed Mrs. Williams promptly, " but plenty of it."

" I think you can depend upon the food, Sir

Francis," said Mr. Apps. "I've took a good deal of trouble over what I may term the menu, and I rather imagine, Sir Francis——" The chairman of the evening waved him aside, and addressing Mrs. Williams, explained that he was under doctor's orders and described some of the effects that resulted whenever he went too far in the way of food. On Mr. Apps again endeavouring to interpose, the chairman ordered him off to the dining-room, and resumed conversation with the hostess.

The foreman, seated at the end of one of the long tables, scarcely remained in his chair for two consecutive minutes when the party assembled; he did keep still whilst Sir Francis said a few bright words of welcome, but thenceforward he was about the room, here reproving one for misuse of the knife, there giving reminder about a speech to follow the meal; the company said he was like a mechanical toy. Hot dishes were served; the waiters brought well-filled plates, and the diners had to resolve whether to take beef or mutton. Sir Francis decided to accept one small slice of well-done beef, and found it so much to his taste that he demanded more, and

then resolved to try the mutton ; summoning Mrs. Williams, he paid a compliment that brought the flush of satisfaction to her cheeks. Mr. Apps, leaving his place once more, went and intercepted her, and complained that suet pudding had not been served ; she retorted that this dish went out of fashion years before.

" But my landlady always gives it to me on Sundays."

" You tell your landlady that she's behind the times."

" Don't think I shall," said Mr. Apps. " You see, I intend leaving her shortly."

" Why is that ? " she asked, without display of interest.

" You wait," he said meaningly, " until you've heard my speech."

He concealed impatience whilst the chairman gave the loyal toast and " Success to the firm ! " (with guarded references to a new departure in view), but he made no effort in this direction when the oldest and the newest members of the staff responded. True, the timekeeper was brief, speaking but half a dozen sentences, but Mr. Apps shouted " 'Nough said ! " before the smart

man came to an end ; Mrs. Williams had entered to hear the speech, and he gave an imperative order for her withdrawal, which was not obeyed.

" Mr. Apps," said Sir Francis, " will now propose the health of our good and charming hostess. Before he does so, perhaps you will allow me to say that I dine out a good deal—I dine out in fact, more than is wise for me. (Laughter.) I am speaking in all seriousness. (Mr. Apps : " Preserve order over there, can't you ? " A Voice : " All right, Pomposity ; keep your 'air on.") I was saying, when the interruption came from the end of the table——"

Mr. Apps rose to a point of order.

" Sit down ! " ordered Sir Francis. " I dine out frequently, and generally at the end I feel thankful I am exempt from the youthful and no doubt very proper habit of saying the words that convey thanks. But I declare I am using the language, not of compliment but of perfect candour, when I assert that a better meal than this—simple in character but admirably cooked—I never wish to taste. (Cheers.) Now then, Apps. Let us see what you have to say on the subject ! "

Mr. Apps, rising, with the frown of a man

approaching an important task, said it was far from his intention to compete with the chairman. The chairman was one, if he might venture to say so, beloved and respected by all. He did not altogether follow the chairman in his references to a forthcoming change; he submitted they were going very well at present, and he had never been in favour of alterations that were made merely for the sake of altering. Coming to the subject of the toast ("Hear, hear"), he begged to endorse nearly everything that had come from the lips of the chairman. Faults might no doubt be found in the meal served to them that evening. Perhaps he was, in regard to his tastes, old-fashioned. (A Voice: "And in appearance.") What was wanted in a hotel like the Navigators' Arms was a man. A man could give orders, and see that they were carried out. A man could put a stop to any disorder that might occur.

"We never have any," interposed Mrs. Williams.

"Sir Francis," said Mr. Apps, "I am about to do something that is probably, and in all likelihood, unprecedented on the part of a man who makes a public speech. I do not embark upon

it without taking thought, and I trust the other party concerned will take what I am about to say as an indication or signal of my high regard. I have reason to believe that our hostess looks upon me with a certain amount of favour. She is aware that, whilst I am by no means what is termed a bigoted teetotaler, I am a man who keeps a very strict control over himself. I have led a healthy, moderate life, never shirking——”

“ I don’t know what our friend Apps is driving at,” said the chairman, “ but he appears to think he is unveiling his own statue. (Laughter.) My motor is waiting, and perhaps he won’t mind coming to the question. The toast is that of ‘ Our Hostess.’ ”

“ I comply with your suggestion, Sir Francis,” said the foreman, “ and I do so without delay. I ask the present company to drink this toast with musical honours, and I beg to ask the lady to kindly consent to be my wife ! ”

The idea of the company was to sing “ For she’s a jolly good fellow ! ” with great energy, but the startling announcement partially baulked vocal intention. The two maids, just inside the doorway, whispered in an agitated, sibilant manner

to each other, and one was heard to say : " Oh, I do hope she won't ! " Sir Francis covered his head with his hands as one overmastered by deep emotion ; he found his handkerchief and said to his neighbour : " This is something to take home to the wife ! " Most of the eyes were on Mrs. Williams ; she gazed at the floor.

" —And so say all of us."

" Mrs. Williams will now reply," announced the chairman. Perfect silence came.

" I am," said Mrs. Williams, looking hard at a coloured portrait of Queen Victoria on the wall—
" I am very much obliged to you all. My people have done their best, and I feel glad you are satisfied. I have always lived on good terms with the people at the works since my husband died four years ago, and there's never been anything like trouble with any of you. I quite realize that without the works the Navigators' Arms wouldn't be worth a great deal. Thank you very much." She was going to the doorway, when voices recalled her. " Oh," she remarked " I thought Mr. Apps meant it for a joke. But if he meant it seriously, my answer is that supposing I did get married again"—here she smiled—" I

sh'd choose a jolly sight better-looking man than him ! ”

Several of the younger men, flushed with the meal, approached the foreman and tendered a few words of condolence. There was an interval of ten minutes before the musical portion of the evening started, and everybody had risen, but not all dared to come along in his direction; he spoke with great plainness to those who did so. A messenger arrived with a message. Sir Francis had left, and requested that Mr. Apps should take the chair. Mr. Apps, declaring he would prefer to be hanged, went out and found his hat and coat. The military timekeeper was talking to the proprietress of the Navigators' Arms.

“ Thought yourself very clever, no doubt,” Apps said to her with vehemence, “ flouncing me in front of all those people.”

“ You shouldn't have been so silly.”

“ Silly or not,” he declared, “ I'll take jolly good care that you suffer for it. Don't forget that.”

“ I'll try to remember, Mr. Apps. Mind the step as you go out ! ”

He had rehearsed the proceedings very carefully, and it was hard to be robbed of the third act wherein he proposed to give notice to his landlady in Neptune Street, and at the same time release a number of grievances which he had stored and warehoused. By his orders, she was waiting up when he arrived, and her husband was with her; they appeared to have quarrelled, and were both in the antagonistic mood which requires only a dispute with a third person to vanish and give way to friendliness. Mr. Apps's desire to avoid argument was a wise one, but they refused to entertain it, and, in duet, recited a list of his defects as a lodger; he slept ill that night and gave up the waking hours to tardy invention of repartees. On the way to the works in the morning, he posted a card to the superintendent of the local police station. The alert young timekeeper saluted at the entrance to the works; Mr. Apps accepted a brass token.

"May want a chat with you later on, my man."

"I shall be at your disposal, sir."

The consultation took place that afternoon in a corner of the yard mainly occupied by scrap

iron. Mr. Apps had been anxious not to overestimate the grins he encountered, but it did seem to him that there was an undue amount of quiet amusement going on, and his pride was hurt, his temper had become heated. He looked the timekeeper up and down.

"Your name's Thompson, I believe." The timekeeper admitted the accusation. "Formerly in the army." The timekeeper nodded assent. "I think I am correct in saying that you soldier chaps can put away a tidy amount in the way of liquor." The timekeeper gave a gesture, indicating the modesty of one not prepared to blow his own trumpet. "Now I want you to do something for me, and as every labourer is worthy of his hire, I'm going to pay you for it." He took the other's arm, and spoke in a confidential whisper.

At half-past six Mr. Apps entered the Navigators' Arms in company with Thompson. Thompson stumbled over the mat in entering, but recovered, to exchange a word with the proprietress, as Apps went on to the private saloon. He followed immediately.

"Now then," said Apps, "you understand

that I don't begrudge money over this job ; at the same time, I've no wish to squander it. There's moderation in everything. Question I want to put to you is : what's the stuff that will have the quickest effect ? I'm only an amateur in this sort of business ; you're a professional. Give it a name ! ”

“ Gin ! ” suggested the other.

The young man's capacity astounded Mr. Apps. The white beverage served, the ex-soldier said, “ Well, here's long life to all of us ! ” and drank off contents of his glass in one gulp. Apps, relying for himself on a milder drink, found as the clock went towards eight that he could not see the hands distinctly ; his companion seemed as clear-headed as at the start. Becoming confidential, Mr. Apps forgot much that he had said before, and said it again, repeated it two or three times, and emphasized arguments with a blow intended to strike but just missing the table. He gave one more order, and the barmaid declined to serve him ; she professed, however, her willingness to supply the command so far as Mr. Thompson was concerned.

“ Wha' you mean by it, miss ? ” he demanded

noisily. "Intend to say I'm the worse for drink?"

"You will be soddy if you're not careful. Anyway, you get no more here."

"I'm Englishman," said Mr. Apps indistinctly, "and I ask you to treat me in proper manner. That's all I ask!"

"James!" called the barmaid.

The odd man engaged at the Navigators' Arms, taking Mr. Apps' shoulder, inquired politely whether he was going with or without a fuss and as Apps was sent rather violently through the front doorway, he came into collision with an inspector of police and a sergeant. They advised him to get off home as quietly as he could, and entered to have a friendly chat with Mrs. Williams and to show her an unsigned postcard.

"Though what would have happened," said Thompson to her, when the officials had shaken hands and left, "if I'd been served with anything but pure water, I shouldn't exactly like to say. Now let's talk about three weeks hence, old dear. That's what's occupying my mind at the present moment!"

The timekeeper left the works on the day pre-

ceding the event referred to. In view of the popularity he had gained during his brief term of office (he succeeded an unusually grumpy man), and in view of the notable position he would henceforward occupy, the workmen, readily put down their threepences, and a handsome set of spoons was presented. Mr. Apps declined to join in this tribute. He said, decisively, that he had other and more worthy objects for his money. He assured them he wished Thompson no harm, but he could not persuade himself that the chap had been well advised in marrying a widow. Mr. Apps prophesied that before three months were out Thompson would have left the neighbourhood. Doubt being expressed on this point, he made five separate wagers of a shilling each

"Like to know how much money old Pomposity has got put away," remarked one.

"I lay," said another, "that if the truth was known he's got as much as five and twenty poun'."

Apps's store was greater than they imagined. When he called some days later on a commercial gentleman, he was able to speak, with determination, of hundreds; this occurred at the moment

when the other hinted at disinclination to deal with men of straw. Satisfactory proof of the statement being given, the public-house broker aroused himself and promised to do all that mortal man could do, and a good deal beyond. Within a fortnight Mr. Apps received from him a satisfactory communication, and having signed and returned the documents, at once wrote a note which he adorned with the literary skill at his command ; he could not conceal his surprise at the calm with which the thunderbolt was received. The clerk to whom he had it glanced at the letter, turned over the pages and said casually : " Oh, I see. Well, I shouldn't think there'll be the slightest difficulty about that." Sir Francis paid a visit to the works that day and Apps broke the tragic news as gently as he could. Sir Francis appeared concerned, but on ascertaining that Apps was referring to himself, showed relief, and said something about enjoying the *otium cum dignitate*, a reference that the foreman, in his turn, misunderstood ; he retorted that the place was much nearer.

" If I don't see you again then before you go," said Sir Francis, " good-bye and good luck. By

the bye, did you repeat the offer you made at the annual dinner? I've been asked once or twice whether anything further happened. Never saw a woman quite so much amused over anything as my wife was when I told her about it."

"Something further has happened, and something still further is going to happen."

"I won't press for information," said the managing director. "We all have our secrets. I, myself, have been keeping one for some time. I want you to get the men together in half an hour, so that I can make an announcement to them."

"It's very good of you, Sir Francis. If there's any idea of a testimonial, perhaps you might recommend it should take the form——"

"My announcement will not refer to you, Apps; in the new circumstance, it will not concern you. And if I were you, I wouldn't throw out any suggestion regarding a farewell present. You see, you are not at all popular with the men."

Apps went about and issued instructions with something more than his usual truculence; in one or two cases where inquiries were made, he

had to pretend a knowledge he did not possess. The men, later, ranged themselves in lines ; he went up and down the ranks, ordering hands to be taken from pockets, directing that the attitude should be one of greater precision. " I'd like to boil him ! " said one of the censured men. Sir Francis appeared ; Apps directed that caps should be taken off, but the managing director cancelled the order.

" I have troubled you to come here," he said, " because I have news to communicate that has hitherto not been made public. It is of some importance, and no one here or near the works is acquainted with it. I say ' no one,' but that is perhaps not strictly correct. I did, some time since, give a hint to the lady who keeps the hotel over the way ; Mrs.—Mrs. Williams, I think the name is."

" Thompson, sir."

" Mrs. Thompson. My memory is not so good as it was. I told her because I thought it only fair she should know. Your directors have given a great amount of consideration to the matter, and they have decided to transfer the works to the north of England. The change

will take place without delay, and I wish to express an earnest hope that you will all—with the exception of our friend Apps, who has sent in his resignation——”

Loud cheering from the men.

“—That you will come with us, bring your families, and do your best for the firm in the new sphere of action!”

The name over the porch of the Navigators' Arms is now George Henry Apps. The space occupied by the old works is still in the market, and devotes itself mainly to wild flowers, the names of which are guessed at by residents. When, amongst the few and rare customers in the bar, the question is discussed and the views of the proprietor of the hotel are invited, he is greatly tempted to reply by aiming at the assembled company a pewter tankard.

HUMANE SOCIETY

THE watering-cart went along slowly near to the pavement, in no way disturbed by appeals from conveyances subject to a time-table. A motor omnibus that had been delayed for the space of ten seconds rushed to the point where a standard notice said, "All Cars Stop Here," and immediately slithered across to the centre of the wet roadway; the back portion knocked over the iron post, a crash of glass followed, screams came. Mr. Fenning was down the steps, off the 'bus, and well outside the danger zone before his companion or any other passenger found opportunity to move.

"Presence of mind!" he declared, answering Miss Lewis's criticisms, and rubbing his heated face. "That's all it was. Acted on the impulse of the moment, and I defy any one to blame me for what I did."

"Looked after yourself, at all events."

"My theory has always been," he contended eagerly, "that in a moment of danger it is the policy everybody ought to adopt. Otherwise valuable time is lost, to the detriment of all concerned. How was I to know that the bus might not give another nasty swerve, and topple over? What advantage would it be to you, Beatrice, for my life to be put in peril?"

"But how about me?"

"If what you want to argue is that I ought to have took you in my arms and brought you down the steps——"

"It would have looked a jolly sight better," declared Miss Lewis.

"Maybe! From a romantic point of view. But from the point of view of what I may call practical politics, I sh'd like to remark that in the pocket of my other waistcoat that's at home, I have a card furnished to me a week ago after you stepped off that weighing-machine at a place called Fairy Land, over Paddington way."

"Mr. Fenning," as he started to join the interested crowd that had gathered around two policemen, the driver, the conductor, and a L.C.C. official—"Mr. Fenning, I have never, in the

course of our short acquaintance, suspected you of being a gentleman, but, until now, I have not regarded you as a coward."

He gave a laugh intended to convey that he perceived the humour of this remark, and for some minutes joined in the heated discussion, where every one was explaining how the accident occurred, and nobody seemed disposed to listen.

A remark offered by him, annoyed the conductor, who, giving to the debate a personal turn, introduced him as the chap who had beaten all records. "Fairly fell down the steps, he did," said the conductor. "Looked as if he thought the end of the world had come. Old man," addressing Mr. Fenning, "if you ain't in the pantomime at the Marlborough next December, I shall spend my sixpence at a picture palace." The youth retired from the consultation, and found Miss Lewis had disappeared. The annoying detail was that a penny fare remained unused on each of their tickets.

Returning slowly to her mother's establishment in Holloway Road, he ascertained that the young woman had not arrived.

"And what's more," snapped Mrs. Lewis, "I

don't know where you are likely to find her, and if I did, I probably shouldn't tell you. Handed her over to your care, and you ought to have looked after her. I've had enough to worry me during the last ten minutes, and you can get out of my shop soon as ever you please."

On the pavement at the opposite side of the roadway he found an uncle of his sweetheart's, a deplorable-looking man whose frock-coat was held by a single button; not often referred to in domestic conversation, and now wearing the look of one with a grievance against the Fates. Mr. Lewis explained that he had called upon his sister-in-law to obtain a small and temporary amount to carry him to the end of the week, and had been treated as though he were a mere beggar; he assured Fenning that it would be long ere he again offered to any relative the chance of doing him a courtesy. The two, brought together by possession of a grievance, walked up Seven Sisters' Road, and young Fenning described the off-hand treatment (as he expressed it) to which he had been subjected.

"Of course," said the elder man, "your trouble is that she has expectations of money."

"I don't call that trouble."

"What I mean is that your plan of dealing with her would be much simpler if there wasn't house property about."

"A most unfair suggestion," protested Fenning warmly. "If I'm fond of a girl, I'm fond of her for her sake alone. The amount she's got put by, or the sum she's likely to come into later on, doesn't affect me in the very least."

"Oh well," said Miss Lewis' uncle, "if you're going to stay up on that perch, nothing I can do is likely to help you. I had got an idea in my head that seemed likely to assist both of us, but since you take this attitude——"

"Supposing I admit that everything else being equal, I prefer a lady with a certain proportion of the world's goods. Supposing I concede that I look upon that as a set-off to a certain tendency to plumpness."

"Now," agreed the other, "now we can begin to talk."

They entered the gates of the park, and still conversing earnestly, walked towards the lake. Many young couples were strolling about, and Mr. Lewis said he had no anxiety for the coming

performance to be witnessed by a crowd. Fenning expressed regret that he was, at the moment, wearing a suit of flannels that belonged to the previous year, and asked whether there was time for him to run home and change into an older costume.

"If you once leave me," said his companion frankly, "the small stock of courage you possess will vanish on the way. Now's your time, now's your opportunity, and if you miss this, the chance will never come again." •

It was near to closing time before they were able to carry out the scheme. Mr. Lewis, on returning to the bank, remarked that the other's appearance would not convince a kitten, and insisted upon ducking him completely, head to foot. Then they ran, ignoring comments from folk who were leaving the park, and discovering near the station, first a taxi-cab, the driver of which recommended them to take a barge, second, a four-wheeler with not so much prejudice against damp. The night had grown cool, and as they drove off, escaping the groups of people, their teeth chattered, and young Fenning spoke of mustard and hot water; his companion re-

ferred to rum, as a valuable medicine. Outside the closed shop, wet coins were handed to the driver, who demanded, but did not obtain, an extra shilling for the task of swabbing out the cab, and as they rang the bell at the side door, their dripping clothes made a pool of water.

Some delay ensued, and Fenning expressed a fear lest, after all the trouble taken, they should not be able to gain admittance; alternatively, that the delay might be sufficient to dry their suits. To avoid observation from the curious, they stood well inside the porch, with the result that when the door presently opened they tumbled upon Mrs. Lewis, causing that lady to give a shriek of terror which brought her daughter down the stairs to join in firing questions. What had happened? Where had it happened? What was the use of having the linoleum in the passage cleaned and polished if folk called, leaving damp marks all over the place?

"We shall have plenty of time for talk," said Mr. Lewis, shivering extravagantly. "First of all, if there's any of my poor brother's clothes left that you haven't exchanged for ferns, allow us two to go up to the bath-room and make a change.

Otherwise, we shall both perish on the spot and you'll be responsible."

Mrs. Lewis's view was that each should go to his respective home and there find dry apparel; her daughter, anxious for news, ran and put everything ready. Twenty minutes later the two entered the sitting-room over the shop, in suits for which they had not been measured. The attitude of Mrs. Lewis, as she gazed at them over her glasses, was still defensive, and it was to Miss Lewis that the relative addressed explanations.

"I left here," he said, shaking his head dolefully, "feeling that nothing remained but to put an end to my life. Seemed to me that there was no sense in my going on, and the sooner I came to a finish the better it would be for all parties concerned. No doubt the coroner would have referred to me as being in a state of unsound mind."

"I've been saying that for years," remarked the elder lady.

"Be that as it may," he went on, "I arrived at a definite conclusion, and the only point to decide was how to carry out my desperate resolve.

I thought of the Tube railway, and hurling myself in front of a train." The girl shuddered. "Unfortunately, I hadn't a sou in my pocket to offer at the booking-office. I considered the tram lines, and foresaw that the driver might pull up. I went into a chemist's shop, and the young man declined to put the item down to your account."

"I would willingly have paid anything within reason," said Mrs. Lewis.

"Eventually, I thought of the water, and of the fortunate circumstance that, being unable to swim, it would be impossible for me to save myself, even if tempted to do so. And this, ladies," with a gesture, "this is where my gallant preserver came in. Providence sent him to the brink of the lake just as I came up for the third time. It's an experience I never want to undergo again, and if I tried to describe it to you, it would scarcely sound credible. At the first go in the sensation was one of intense relief. 'Farewell,' I said, speaking to myself, 'farewell to all the trials and troubles of this world ; adieu to relations with hearts of stones.' Then," dramatically, "then, all my past life seemed to come in front of me."

"That couldn't have been pleasant," remarked his sister-in-law.

"Did Mr. Fenning jump in after you?" asked the girl eagerly.

"Ask him!" snapped her uncle, annoyed by the interruption.

"I'd rather," said Fenning modestly, "he told it in his own way. He can make it more interesting than what I could."

Mr. Lewis, continuing, gave an imitation of the choked voice in which he appealed to his gallant preserver to leave him alone, furnished the answer given, described the struggle and Mr. Fenning's adroit treatment on the bank for restoration of the apparently drowned.

"I can see now," he admitted, "that whilst there's characters like him about and to be encountered, why, life is worth living. He wasn't to know that I happened to be a slight acquaintance of his. He wasn't aware that the would-be suicide was a relative of the young lady he's practically engaged to. All he saw, was a fellow-creature in the water, and he never stopped even to take off his boots; he simply dived right in. If there ever was a young man

possessing what I may call absolute fearlessness, here he is."

"Seems very curious," said Mrs. Lewis, taking up her work-basket, "that he chanced to be there."

"The hand of fate," remarked the other. "As soon as I come to, I recognized him, and my first words was, 'Let's get back to Holloway Road, so that they can thank you properly.'"

"Thank him?"

"Make suitable acknowledgments. If I'd got money, he should have every penny I possessed."

"Bless my goodness," exclaimed Mrs. Lewis heatedly, "I wouldn't give him a single farthing for doing this. If he'd stayed on the bank, and let you drown, I'm not sure I wouldn't have asked him to stay on to supper out of sheer gratitude. You've been a borrower and a nuisance ever since my poor husband died, and the best news any one could bring me, would be to the effect that I was rid of you."

"After that remark," he said, rising from the chair in a dignified manner, "it is my painful duty to inform you that I shall never set foot in

this house again. You can plead to me on your bended knees, but I shan't alter my decision."

"Take your old suit away from the bath-room, and make yourself scarce as soon as ever you like."

She allowed him to go to the door. "What puzzles me is, how are you going to exist? Looks almost, Jacob, as though you'll have to work."

"Fortunately," he said, glancing at Mr. Fenning, "I know where to go when I'm hard up."

His departure broke constraint, and the three, seated at the window, talked freely as they watched him cross the roadway.

Miss Lewis, touching Fenning's hand to ascertain if he were chilled, declared it a risky but splendid act to perform: one could hold an opinion in regard to uncle and his value, but that had nothing to do with Mr. Fenning's share in the incident. At her request, Mrs. Lewis went to the back room to put the kettle on the gas-ring, and mix a hot beverage.

"You never told me you could swim, Charles."

"It's a thing everybody ought to be able to do."

" Ever won any prizes for it ? "

" We've talked about it quite enough, Beatrice," he remarked. " Let's think of a new subject. Been quite a chapter of accidents to-day, hasn't it ? First the motor-bus affair ; then——"

" Do you know," she said confidentially, " I did you such an injustice over that. I got the idea in my head that you were not quite so brave as you might be, and I was so mad about it, I scarcely knew what I was saying, or what I was doing. Try to forget all about it, will you ? "

" Let me give you a kiss," suggested Fenning, " and I'll forget anything you like."

" Well, hurry," said Miss Lewis. " You gentlemen that have never been in love before are so slow ! "

It was late ere the young man took his leave, because Mrs. Lewis honoured him with prolonged and flattering confidences regarding the family, the business, and finance generally. She promised to see to the drying of his suit, claiming to be specially gifted in the work of pressing clothes with an iron sufficiently warm for the purpose, but not so hot as to convey injury. At the door of his lodgings he found Mr. Lewis.

To him, after discussion, he gave three shillings in full payment for services rendered.

"I hoped for more," said Lewis candidly, "but I'm not one to expect other people to perform miracles. Mind you, though, there isn't many who would let you off so cheaply."

- At the warehouse in Gresham Street, the following morning, at an hour when the ribbon department happened to be specially occupied, it was announced that a gentleman wished to see Fenning. The young man, finding Mr. Lewis on the pavement, first complained of the inaccurate description furnished, second, directed that he should state his business without delay. The caller, it appeared, required, in order to meet a special crisis, the sum of half-a-crown; the loan was wanted but for two or three hours, and if Fenning indicated the establishment where he usually took lunch, Mr. Lewis would be there ready to pay back the coin.

"Don't get the idea that I'm blackmailing you," begged the visitor, perceiving hesitation; "I'm too high-minded to do that. Only, if you don't do this small transaction for me, it will be my duty to go straight to Holloway Road and——"

The amount was handed over, with a few words hinting that here loans or gifts would stop definitely. At half-past one, Fenning entered the restaurant with no expectation of seeing his middle-aged friend ; the circumstance that the other had made careful note on the back of an envelope of the hour and the address only, confirmed the youth's suspicions that the appointment would not be kept. The manageress gave him a smile of welcome, that was almost a laugh, and after he had been supplied with food, came across to mention that she had seen him, near Finsbury Park station on the previous evening, in a condition that made her feel more grateful than ever that her young sister had broken off, a year before, an engagement with Mr. Fenning.

" I'd been saving a man's life," he retorted.

" Not you," she said incredulously. " I can believe a lot of things, but I can't swallow that."

" Here he comes," mentioned Fenning. " Ask him yourself."

Mr. Lewis, apologizing for being two minutes late, took a seat at the table, said he would have the same that his friend was taking, and, appealed to, gave, with generous detail, confirmation of the

statement. The manageress, greatly impressed, took back all she had said and remarked it was a pity Emily had married: were Emily still single, this striking act of bravery would undoubtedly persuade her to overlook Mr. Fenning's various defects. The young man, content with this change of view, mentioned to Lewis, when the manageress had gone, that he was to consider himself as a guest.

"Why, of course," said the other, with surprise. "You never expected, surely, that I was going to pay for anything whilst you were about? And that reminds me. I want another five bob."

"Which you most certainly won't get."

"Don't be too hasty in your statements," warned Lewis. "Listen to what I've got to tell you. My sister-in-law sent across word just now for those clothes I borrowed last night. I took them back. She'd been talking to customers concerning your bravery, and some one told her the depth of the water at Finsbury Park. She'd come to the conclusion that neither you nor me was in danger for a single moment throughout the whole of the proceedings, and that your

diving in to save me was simply a matter of utter impossibility."

"I never said I dived in."

"But I did. And you were present when I said it, and you didn't contradict."

Fenning pushed his plate away, leaned elbows on the table, and clutched at the top of his head with both hands. His companion, with aid of a fork, took well-done cuts of beef from Fenning's plate.

"Fortunately," he said, "you've got a partner in this business who is a man—although I say it who, perhaps, shouldn't—a man of resource, and a man of more than common intelligence. I said at once that a misunderstanding had taken place, due, no doubt, to the excitement of the moment. I explained that the affair didn't take place in Finsbury Park at all."

"Where did it occur then?"

"In the canal," said Lewis, winking portentously. "They can't get over that. The canal is deep enough to suit anybody. Now I put it to you. Is that worth another five bob, or isn't it?"

"But I can't go on forking out money like

this," protested the youth distractedly. " Means ruination to me. If I keep advancing sums to you, I shan't be able to afford the little luxuries—theatres, concerts and so forth—that a young lady is entitled to expect."

" All right," said the other, with composure. " That leaves nothing for me to do, but to make my way back to Holloway Road, and tell the truth."

" Do so," challenged Fenning, " do so, by all means." It struck him that he was performing the first courageous deed of his life.

City youths, and others deeply engaged in business, are in the habit—on meeting the lady of their heart at evening time, or in communicating by the last post—of remarking that she has not been absent from their thoughts during the whole of the day. In young Fenning's case, it was only when Gresham Street released him at half-past six that he was able to give his mind again to a perplexing question; the interval, having provided his brain with other interests, enabled him to regard it with freshness and sanity. He made his way, with all dispatch, to the shop kept by his sweetheart's mother;

his resolve to adopt a straightforward course increased at each jerk of the motor-omnibus. On the journey he recollected something left in the jacket of the flannel suit ; the thought induced him to give a hopeless gesture, and to express the view that it was useless for him to try to do right. Miss Lewis was alone at the counter, reading : she presented to him pained features and tear-dimmed eyes.

"Your uncle's been here then," he said desperately.

"We haven't seen him since last night. Mother sent him word this morning to keep the suit we lent, and said that if he came here again, we'd call in the police. We shan't be bothered with him any more. Charles," she cried, "look at this ! Here's a bit in the evening paper that has upset me to such an extent—— Lend me your handkerchief. Mine's upstairs."

He took the journal and looked at the foot of a page where absence of sufficient news of the day had necessitated, or permitted, a few two-line paragraphs. "A well-known lady novelist says a man's first love is ever a delusion and a sham."

"Where's your mother, Beatrice?" he asked, putting the newspaper down. Miss Lewis touched a bell on the counter. "I want to tell her something."

Mrs. Lewis came, bringing, with an air of majesty, the suit of flannels. She laid the articles upon the counter; a-top was a letter in a feminine handwriting.

"Didn't mean to leave one of Emily's notes in the pocket," he said, reddening.

"That can be easily understood. I wish my daughter to read it. It is for her to decide whether or not the acquaintance shall be broken off, and my opinion is that she won't hesitate for a moment."

The Post Office is not always clear and accurate in the endorsements it prints upon envelopes; in this case the year was distinctly shown, and Mr. Fenning was able, in addition, to give the lady's new name. Mrs. Lewis argued that the facts should not have been left to chance discovery, but her daughter said anything which happened before she herself came on the scene was no concern of hers, excepting that it cleared a terrible anxiety from her mind.

"If that's the view you take," remarked the mother, "so be it. But before I let this engagement go on, I want Mr. Fenning here to promise me one thing. If he should ever again come across your dreadful Uncle Jacob trying to put an end to it all, will he please give me his word of honour that he won't interfere?"

"I promise!" said Fenning readily.

GROWING POPULARITY

MY price is thirty bob, and you can jolly well take it or leave it." Mr. Mellor declares he had never before met with any woman so brusque and curt in manner.

"The drawback about you is that you ask too much."

"The blot on your character, old son," retorted the extremely vulgar person, "is that you offer too little."

To save further argument with a woman not only unworthy of his caustic method of speech but also his superior in fluency, he purchased the bust for twenty-five shillings; the vendor wrapped it carelessly in a sheet of a weekly journal and tested the coins between teeth.

"Ain't sorry to see the back of it," she admitted, the transaction over. "A melancholy-looking boulder, whoever sat for it. I'd begun to think I sh'd have to give the article away myself for a weddin' present."

Mr. Mellor, arriving home at Highgate, placed the bust in a good light and regarded himself in the mirror. Inspection reinforced his early view that a certain resemblance existed; the bust had no side whiskers, and this perturbed him; he wondered whether a handy mason, to be found perhaps down near the cemetery, would be able to do anything in the matter. It suddenly occurred to him that a cheaper and more convenient way would be to take himself to the hairdresser. On his return the landlady met him and expressed herself in enthusiastic and eloquent terms concerning the new addition to the art of the household.

"What's the name of the gentleman who carved it for you, sir?"

"Quite a youngster," he replied evasively, "but I rather fancy he has a future. Wouldn't take a single penny. Insisted on my accepting the bust as a gift."

"I'd no idea, sir, that you were so popular."

Mr. Mellor, that evening, gave an order to a jeweller and goldsmith in Highgate Village, and a few days later the bust, set conspicuously on a painted wooden pedestal which he called

by the pet name of ebony, wore a brass label thus inscribed :—

“ To My Dear and Valued Friend,
ANDREW JOSEPH MELLOR.
A Token of High Esteem.”

Mellor had retired at middle age from an office which was rubbed out of existence by a Ministry suddenly reminded that some of its members had promised retrenchment. In ordinary circumstances a departing member of the staff would have been presented with a silver-plated article, the result of a half-a-crown subscription ; the conditions imposed by a niggardly Government made this impossible in Mr. Mellor's case, and the prematurely-superannuated gentlemen had to be content on the last day with speaking a few plain words to each other, ridding themselves of the pent-up frankness of a lifetime. Mellor retained in his mind the unanimity with which the rest selected the word, “ cantankerous,” in their references to him. He had spent the two years of his retirement in making determined and, to some extent, successful efforts to justify the adjective.

Mr. Mellor paid, in the following week, a second

visit to Caledonian Road, and looked about amongst the pictures. It was scarcely to be hoped that he would be so lucky as upon his first call, but he did find a portrait painted in oils that had no resemblance to his own features ; it was weatherbeaten, and the frame exhibited signs of age. To this he affixed a neat ivory label, " Admiral Mellor, R.N. Presented to my dear grandson, Andrew Joseph, in the confident Hope that he will serve his Country as I have done." Mellor gave a small dinner, with the aid of his landlady's sister, a cook temporarily—for a reason she could not understand—out of employment, and said to have been often flattered by chefs with a world-wide reputation ; the gifted lady looked in at eleven o'clock, and became tearful because not one of the guests would honour her with company in a dance. They remarked to each other—commenting on the change in Mellor's deportment whilst their host was engaged in arguing with the cook—that the age of miracles had surely come again. Before this they had inspected the bust, and some thought it scarcely did justice to their friend ; the portrait made a greater impression because here was proof that

he came from a good stock. Men with greater tact would perhaps have made some attempt to conceal astonishment.

"I ought to have a book somewhere," said Mellor casually, "with a full account of all his most notable deeds, but I can't lay my hand on it just for the moment. You must see it when you call next." One of the guests proposed a toast to the memory of their friend's grandfather, and pointed out the urgent need for a strong navy.

It was the plated silver tray that touched the sentiment of Miss Goodlake. She was a social worker and called occasionally to see Mr. Mellor's landlady and to induce her to join the Band of Bright and Cheery Workers that met once a week in a mission-room and darned socks. The landlady in giving the third refusal on the grounds that she was no longer interested in men's wear, excepting so far as Mr. Mellor was concerned, tried to soften the blow by inviting the caller in and permitting her to inspect the accumulating evidence of popularity. The tray—another purchase at the Cattle Market, where some of the traders were beginning to know him well, setting him amongst

the list of possible buyers—had but just come back from the engravers, and it rested on the sideboard with an inscription, "To A. J. M., best and kindest of men, from Ethel."

Miss Goodlake, interested in this, asked several questions which the landlady found herself unable to answer; the visitor suggested it meant an amicable termination of an affair of the heart, and the other admitted that this was just possible. Mr. Mellor had arrived at what the landlady called a pretty decent age, but girls nowadays did not seem to object to this. Miss Goodlake declared that from her own point of view a gentleman could be an octogenarian and yet possess a kind disposition; the landlady said she preferred those who took animal food. In the middle of this attractive discussion Mr. Mellor entered.

"Don't know what you'll think of me," said Miss Goodlake confusedly.

"It would be scarcely fair to tell you," replied Mr. Mellor with his new air of courtesy, "in the presence of a third person."

"It must be perfectly beautiful to be so much admired."

"One can only hope that one does something

to deserve it. But you yourself, surely with all your good works—— ”

“ No,” said Miss Goodlake. “ Never so much as a tea service.”

The landlady, on his direction, brought cups and saucers, and the visitor declared that better toast could not be encountered.

He was away for two or three week-ends, invited by people in the home counties who had heard of his popularity, and the chance of seeing Miss Goodlake at the church which she had specially named did not occur. At a house in Surrey he found another admiring lady whose only defect was that she kept up an interest in outdoor sports, whilst he cared for nothing more active than an occasional game of draughts. She professed her willingness to do anything in reason for him at any time, and as a beginning tendered a gift of a tennis racket slightly out of repair. It made an addition to the gallery of tributes he was forming and represented the first that had not been bought with his own money. He found at Highgate a communication signed Amelia wherein the writer said she could no longer restrain her admiration, and announced

an intention of calling after lunch the following day.

"This is all very well," he said apprehensively, "but I don't want to get overcrowded."

To his great concern the landlady announced at two o'clock on the next day a visit from Miss Goodlake, and imagination furnished a scene between two jealous women with himself as a perturbed spectator; the relief on discovering from Miss Goodlake's first words that she was the writer of the letter caused him to adopt his best manner. The lady, glancing around at the bust, the oil painting, the tray, and other articles, said she could understand how it was he had gained so much affection, and announced frankly that she was in love, an experience which had not come to her since schooldays at St. Leonards. With equal candour she mentioned that her income amounted to £600 a year.

"Amelia Goodlake," said Mr. Mellor promptly, "will you be mine?"

"If you insist, Andrew," she answered, "I suppose I must, but this impetuosity almost takes my breath away. Let us consider it quietly."

Her great curiosity proved to concern Ethel, and the desire to know all that led up to the presentation of the tray and its pathetic endorsement would take no denial. Mr. Mellor afterwards blamed himself severely for not having the presence of mind to kill Ethel. It could have been done so easily. A hundred complaints occurred to him too late, any one of which would have been sufficient to carry her off. Instead he explained that she was still alive and quite happy, residing in Surrey and devoted to games.

"I shall see her," said Miss Goodlake resolutely, "and if she confirms your account nothing will bar my way to perfect happiness."

"I trust," protested Mr. Mellor with spirit, "this does not mean that you doubt my word."

"Andrew, dismiss that idea from your thoughts at once. Nobody viewing these evidences of general esteem could regard you as untruthful, but it is only fair to myself and fair to her that we should meet and talk the matter over."

Mr. Mellor declares that if it had not been for the £600 he would have taken an austere attitude, ordering her to love him all in all or not at all, or words to that effect. Urged and commanded to

give the address he furnished information, and wrote, so soon as Miss Goodlake had gone, to the lady of the tennis racket ; he marked the letter " private and confidential " and stated the case with fulness and accuracy. Mr. Mellor begged for assistance at a crisis of his life, and referred to one or two cases in history where women had nobly sacrificed themselves for the sake of men. A disturbing reply came to the effect that if called upon by the London lady the writer proposed to tell the truth and nothing but the truth.

It occurs to me now that there is an absence of moral teaching in all this rarely, I trust, missing in the stories I write. Miss Goodlake sent a wire from Godalming Station saying, " Everything highly satisfactory. Best love.—AMELIA." And Mr. Mellor was kept on tenterhooks, as he neatly expresses it, until a communication came less restricted by the necessity of being paid for at the rate of a halfpenny a word.

" I saw the woman, and her first statement to the effect that her name was not Ethel put me on my guard. For the rest, she told what

was evidently a tissue of fabrications from start to finish. I have rarely met envy before, but this experience shows me^o to what lengths it can carry those afflicted by it. Will you please see about the banns, as early as convenient? "

The Highgate Express said the wedding presents were both numerous and costly, and *The Express* was well within the truth. Mrs. Mellor, with a new hobby for collecting old brass, has more than once expressed a[•] desire to be taken to the Cattle Market off Caledonian Road. Her husband, declaring that no one can rightly accuse him of being superstitious, refuses to do this on the ground that the sales take place only on a Friday.

THE, KINGSLAND ROAD GHOST

"**B**EEN working?"

"In a sense," he answered carefully,
"yes."

"You've just come from a race meeting,"
she challenged.

"Them bright eyes of yours," he said with a
waggish nod of the head, "can see through any-
thing."

"They can see through you anyway. What
do you mean by it? What's your idea? I
told you as distinctly as I could speak that if
you wanted to be off on one of these silly old
trips you'd got to ask me first. Now, why
didn't you get my permission, Mr. Nicholls?"

"I'll tell you," he replied. "It was simply
because I knowed quite well you wouldn't give
it."

"Did you back anything?" He gave an

affirmative nod. "And," Miss Cave sighed, "you haven't got any better sense—a man like you, with a very tidy agency that brings in good money—no better sense than go squandering it on humbug like this. It isn't as though you knew anything about it. I saw you once on a horse in Epping Forest years ago, before you were married to your first wife, and I never laughed so much in the whole course of my existence."

"There seems to be some slight misunderstanding," said Mr. Nicholls, helping himself to a scone. "I'm not a jockey. I'm not one of the seven-stun-six men that sit on the gee-gees. The part I play is keeping my two eyes well open and now and again putting on a modest half-crown, or sometimes as much as three bob."

"And you generally lose."

"I generally lose, as you say."

"How much have you lost to-day?"

"To-day," he said, making a mental calculation, "allowing for the expense of railway fare and a little refreshment in the shape of lunch that I sh'd have had even if I stayed at home, I found myself back at Waterloo Station eighteen and

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sixpence to the good. On the way I stepped out of the motor omnibus in Clerkenwell and I bought this bracelet for you."

"William," she cried, accepting the gift, "I do believe I'm scarcely ever out of your thoughts."

The shop was not well adapted for suitable expression of thanks; more than once, on previous occasions, a child's comment from outside of the window had alarmed the two. Miss Cave fixed the bracelet around her wrist, drew back her sleeve a little, the better to judge the effect. They were both of an age that has left delicate sentiment far behind, and she had no compunction in asking how much had been paid for the article, and he, in furnishing particulars, had no hesitation in doubling the amount. A boy entered and examined in a disparaging way the stock of rock-cakes.

"All the same, William," said Miss Cave, speaking now in a manner of gentle reproach, "I don't take back anything I've said. I was going to call you double-dealing, and double-dealing is the term I must apply to you."

"Two faces are better than one."

"It isn't a matter to make a joke about.

Lady friends come to me and mention what they know about your goings on——”

“I’ll lay a dollar,” he interrupted with spirit, “that they don’t restrict themselves to what they know. I’ll be bound what they don’t know they make up.” •

“And some of them are aware of what you promised your poor wife the last Sunday she was in the Metropolitan Hospital. She said, poor creature, she said, ‘William, promise me you’ll never bet again.’ And you gave your word. And she said, ‘William, promise me you’ll never drink again.’ And you gave your word.” • •

“If the nurse hadn’t come up and told me it was time to go, Mrs. Nicholls would have asked me to promise never to eat again. You’ve got to make some allowance for the peculiarities of the situation. I should have promised her anything in the circumstances, and I should have felt myself justified in so doing.” He slapped at the counter to give added force to his argument. “I’d much rather we didn’t discuss the matter, you and me, Clara, otherwise we shall come to words, in which case we’re likely

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to both say a lot more than what we mean. I was nagged at quite enough, I assure you, in my first wife's time and I don't want any more. Whatever appetite I had for that kind of sport is satisfied."

"Her unmarried sister was in here yesterday."

"Her sister was born unmarried," said Mr. Nicholls violently, "and if she don't look out she'll be unmarried to the end. I've never seen her, and I jolly well don't want, but——"

"Keep cool," ordered Miss Cave. "She was telling me something I didn't properly realize before. Apparently, as you were coming out of the ward, your poor wife called you back and she said, 'William, if you don't keep your vow I shall haunt you till the last day of your life.' Is that a fact?"

"She was a great reader," he explained uneasily, "and she used to stuff more into her noddle than her brain would properly hold. What struck me at the time was that she was just saying a bit she had learnt out of some magazine or book, or what not."

"She did say it then?"

"Words to that effect. But if it's any gratifi-

cation to you or to that unmarried sister—I don't know what else to call her or I'd give her a name—why, the poor soul, as a matter of fact, never has haunted me, and if she did I shouldn't take no special notice." He moved to the doorway.

"Where are you off, William?"

"I'm going," he replied deliberately, "along to my club, where I can meet gentlemen of my own sex and indulge in a little common-sense conversation. Good evening, Clara, and take care of yourself!"

"Seems ratty about something," she remarked to herself in a puzzled way when he had gone. "Wonder what I can have said to upset him."

Trade proved brisk that evening, and the girl who, after school hours, assisted Miss Cave with household tasks, and was being trained with great severity, had the honour more than once of being called into the shop to help in serving customers. At eight o'clock Miss Harrison, sister of the first Mrs. Nicholls, arrived bearing a cardboard box, and the two kissed each other with the warmth and effusiveness that comes with ladies in the early stages of friendship.

"Rosie," said Miss Cave from the back room, using the imperative tones notoriously indispensable in addressing slaves, "come here this minute and look after the counter whilst I'm being fitted. If there's anything inquired for that you don't know the price of, ask me. But be careful how you open this door because I shall have to take my blouse off, and I wouldn't allow any one to catch sight of my bare arms for worlds."

"Not even Mr. Nicholls, miss?"

"Certainly not," she said decisively. "Mr. Nicholls would be shocked. Now, my dear," to the dressmaker, "let's make a start."

The bodice, it appeared, fitted Miss Cave admirably; the skirt proved a trifle long, a fault that Miss Harrison declared easy to remedy. Miss Harrison spoke of the awkward figures she sometimes had to deal with, and Miss Cave, admitting plumpness, expressed a hope she would never become stout, mentioned that her habit of worrying over trifling matters would probably prevent her from going beyond eleven stone six. The dressmaker inquired whether any special topic was affecting her customer, and Miss Cave,

resuming her blouse and accepting help with hooks and eyes at the back which she herself could only reach by an effort in gymnastics, spoke of the recent call from Mr. Nicholls, gave the conversation word for word, and declared generously that she would give £50,000 to any one who could persuade the gentleman to give up the hobby of backing horses.

"If your poor sister could come to life again," said Miss Cave, "she'd give him a good sound talking to on the subject." The dressmaker was replacing the tacked garments in the cardboard box, and a flourish of tissue paper interfered with the remark; Miss Cave repeated it. "If I could only get that anxiety off my mind," she added tearfully, "I do believe I sh'd be as happy as the days are long."

"Wish I could help," said the dressmaker. "Would it be any use me talking to him?"

"Not the slightest," declared Miss Cave, "If I with all my experience can't persuade him I'm jolly well certain that you, with no experience at all——"

Rosie looked in to ask whether such an article was in stock as a pound of wedding cake; a

little boy was inquiring. As the girl closed the door Miss Cave turned suddenly to her visitor. •

“ You could help,” she cried. “ You could do me a very great service if you didn’t mind taking trouble.” ,

“ I’m only too ready to oblige, but you must tell me what to do.”

“ Would you object to putting some powder on your face ? ”

“ I often use a little,” admitted Miss Harrison “ when I’m going out anywhere special.”

Miss Cave told Rosie to keep a sharp lookout for Mr. Nicholls on his return from the club and to call to him in a ladylike way, inviting his presence in the shop ; a double knock on the door of the back room would be taken as a signal that he had arrived. Any failure on the part of Rosie was to be met with instant dismissal from the service. In the room Miss Cave busied herself, and the docile Miss Harrison allowed her hat to be taken off, submitted to a slight whitening of the hair. When all seemed ready the lamp was turned down and Miss Harrison was coached in the few words she had to say.

"I'm awfully nervous," she mentioned.

"Not half so bad as he'll be," prophesied Miss Cave. "He'll have had a glass or two, and we'll give him such a fright."

The girl's voice was heard raised to the pitch necessary to arrest a passer-by. Miss Cave again turned down the oil lamp.

"A hollow voice mind," she whispered warningly; "as hollow as you can make it."

Mr. Nicholls, in improved temper, demanded cheerily whether assistance was required in putting up the shutters. He mentioned it was the rarest piece of luck that he happened to visit the club, for a visitor there who had an uncle, a railway porter at Doncaster, had given him private and particular information concerning a horse that would prove invaluable on the morrow.

"Just step into the back room," begged Miss Cave earnestly. "There's some one there asking for you, and I can't make out for the life of me who or what she is." She trembled. "Looks to me more like a ghost than anything else, only of course there are no such things nowadays."

Mr. Nicholls, with a frown of perplexity, went to the door. Miss Cave ordered Rosie to go to

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the ham and beef shop and make purchases for supper ; she repressed the girl's curiosity and hastened departure by taking her by the shoulder.

" William ! " said the lady seated in the gloom at the table.

" Hullo ! " cried Mr. Nicholls surprisedly. " What on earth are you doing here ? "

" I've come back to earth in order to repeat a warning I gave you once. You promised me you'd never bet ; you promised me you'd never—— "

" Before we enter upon any argument," he interrupted, " let's have a good kiss. "

Miss Harrison gave an ejaculation of dismay in her natural voice, but this was partially smothered by the resolute hug offered to her. Miss Cave, greatly distressed, ran in and endeavoured to turn up the lamp ; the screw declined at first to act upon the wick, and by the time it did consent to perform its duty Miss Harrison was accepting the embraces and showing a resignation of manner that Miss Cave described, so soon as Mr. Nicholls had gone, as perfectly scandalous.

" Why ever didn't you scratch his face, you

hussy, you ? ” she demanded heatedly of her fellow-conspirator.

“ To tell you the truth,” said Miss Harrison, wiping off the powder where it had not already been removed, “ to tell the truth it was my first experience, and I—I rather liked it ”

Miss Cave is still carrying on the business in Kingsland Road. A recent Act of Parliament permitting marriage with the sister of a departed wife enabled Mr. Nicholls to wed, and the couple now live at Earlsfield. Mr. Nicholls finds it handy for both Kempton and Hurst Park.

THE DISAPPEARING TRICK

THE office was preparing to close, complying thus with the suggestions of an Act to which Mrs. Ransome objected and the three assistants offered approval. The windows did not cover themselves with shutters, but gave up their week-ends for the benefit of youngsters who came to gaze at the miniature wagons loaded with real coal; and, with less interest, at current prices of Derby Brights, Cobbles, Roasters.

At one minute past one o'clock the young men told Mrs. Ransome they thought it was going to be, as an exception to a rule, a fine Saturday afternoon, adding that their address until six-thirty would be the Cricket Pavilion, Regent's Park. Mrs. Ransome, placing leather-bound account books in her bag, said she hoped they would have a good game. At five minutes past one she herself left and turned the key in the padlock outside the door.

"My dear!" cried a voice, in a panting way,

intended to suggest that its owner had been hurrying.

"That you, James?"

"Don't tell me," begged Mr. Ransome distressedly, "that my blessed watch is losing again. I shall have to get it seen to."

"Scarcely worth the trouble," she said, with calm.

"But it's the present you gave me when we were married."

"I mean that if you had it regulated, it wouldn't make any difference to the time you keep."

"My love!" he protested, walking by her side. "Don't let's begin one of those discussions of ours that lead nowhere, and only upset my health. As a matter of fact, I've been very busy all the morning going round for orders, and——"

"Did you get any?"

"Trade seems quiet," he explained. "Scarcely anything doing. But, as I say, I've been on the go, and it was my firm intention to get back before twelve, so as to give you a hand with the books."

"Suppose you help with them now. This bag is heavy."

Mr. Ransome called a boy and transferred the task to him ; at the Tube station he requested his wife to give to the young porter the sum of threepence. At the ticket-window she made purchases, and if she had not taken charge of the bag it, would, apparently, have found its way to the Lost Property Office. In the lift and in the train Mr. Ransome gave a description of the route followed that morning in the interests of the business, the rebuffs experienced, the statements made by various folk concerning gas-stoves. He seemed hurt by the circumstance that his wife made no comment, and, arriving at Gillespie Road and coming out again into the sunlight, he remarked on this.

“ Don’t you believe me, darling ? ”

“ Not a single word,” she replied.

As they reached the turning of their road he offered to take the bag, but she declined now to accept his services. At the gate he stopped and mentioned that, the day being fine, he did not propose to go indoors ; the open air suited his constitution better than the atmosphere of stuffy rooms. If his wife would be good enough to let him have a sovereign——

"No !"

"Or, say, fifteen bob."

"No !"

"Well, then, half a quid."

"No !"

Mr. Ransome, seriously disturbed, demanded to be informed the meaning of this unprecedented behaviour. Ever since their marriage, a period that represented nearly twelve months—"I shall get you to let me have some money next week," he remarked casually, "so as I can buy you a memento of some kind for the anniversary"—during all that space it had been the custom for Mrs. Ransome to furnish sums necessary to meet current expenses, as he called them, on request. Where, might he ask, was the sense in departing from a fixed arrangement? Mrs. Ransome, giving the answer readily, declared she was tired of going on in the old way. Mr. Ransome had represented himself to her in courting days as a land surveyor ; it appeared to her he was really nothing better than an inspector of pavements.

"That's unkind !" he asserted.

Mrs. Ransome assured him it was not her

intention to be pleasing. He seemed content to loaf about the streets of St. Pancras doing nothing, and it was, in her opinion, right that he should receive the wages generally paid to those who performed no work. So far as this Saturday afternoon was concerned, she proposed to give him not a single penny.

"Be careful!" he warned. "Be very, very careful. It takes a lot to rouse me, but once my blood is up, and once I make up my mind to a certain course of action, nothing can stop me."

Mrs. Ransome declared that she was not afraid of him or of anything he might do. If he cared to come in and assist with the books, a task that could be completed within a couple of hours, a sum would then be paid to him. A neighbour came to a window and opened it with the pretence of snipping leaves of geraniums in the long box, but evidently desirous of listening to the conversation.

"Look here!" he said, asserting himself bravely in face of an audience. "There's a lot of talk on your side, laying down the law, and ordering people about. Allow me to remind

you that you're not addressing one of your clerks ; you are speaking to a man."

"That's your description, not mine."

"And furthermore," with increasing determination, "I'm going to behave like one. I've got a certain amount of what is called grit in my nature, and for the first time since we've known each other I'm going to make it evident. I can afford to be quite independent of you." The neighbour's wife came to bear her husband company. "I can go back to my old profession, and make a living."

"I should like to see you do it."

"You shall!" he announced, in a shout. "That is to say, you won't exactly see me do it, because I intend never to let you catch sight of me again. But I'm off now, and I don't care who knows it. And if it's any consolation to you, you can take it that you've brought all the trouble on yourself. Try to realize that you're looking on me for the last time."

"Good-bye!" she said.

He swaggered away at a fair pace. Near the end of the road he slackened, expecting to hear a call ; this did not come, and before taking the

turn he looked back. His wife was out of sight, but the neighbour and the neighbour's wife gazed interestedly. Mr. Ransome found satisfaction in the knowledge that news of his resolute behaviour would be distributed.

He counted his money carefully on the way to Hampstead, and discovered that the total sum was two shillings less than the amount he had expected; he remembered now that, to fill in time, he had taken an early lunch. The exact sum at his disposal was three and ninepence, and it occurred to him that this would have to be carefully disbursed in order to take him over the small period of time occupied in waiting for his wife's repentance. At six o'clock, after watching games on the Heath, he obtained the services of a man who was lounging outside a coffee-shop, gave him sixpence, and entrusted to him a letter, the envelope of which was marked "Wait answer."

The man returned to the coffee-shop within half an hour, and demanded another sixpence for bringing the reply, and, this sum being paid with great reluctance, announced that the lady had said there was no answer. Mr. Ransome, considerably pained, wrote a very definitely

worded letter announcing his intention of drowning himself in the pond on the morrow, and carefully mentioned the address where he was staying. To save further expense he himself took this to the house so soon as dusk came. In the basement sitting-room he could see that his supper had been prepared in the usual way, and it required all the available resolution to prevent himself from going down the steps and enjoying the meal. I think he would have done this, or 'y that it occurred to him that it was a piece of great impertinence to assume he would return that evening. He dropped the alarming communication in the letter-box ; hurried off in the way of one who has lighted the fuse for an explosion. In walking back to the coffee-shop where he proposed to stay for the night, he thought, with a certain amount of satisfaction, of the astonishment that would be created, the remorse which would follow the reading of the note.

“ Serves her jolly well right,” he decided.

The next morning after breakfast he found himself with ninepence in his pocket. The rain was coming down, and the proprietress of the establishment inquired facetiously whether he

proposed going to early service. Mr. Ransome replied that he had a much more interesting prospect. On the matronly lady expressing doubts, he gave her details, and she insisted on being allowed to accompany him, declaring she had not enjoyed a really hearty laugh for years and years.

"They'll be dragging the water to find your body," she cried, relishing the joke in anticipation, "and your wife will be on the bank crying her eyes out, and all the time we shall be behind a tree, looking on"

They returned at noon, wet through, and when Mr. Ransome made a suggestion his companion declared, with some vehemence, that rather than allow him to have a meal in the establishment on credit she would prefer to see her name in the Bankruptcy list. He protested it was not his fault that Mrs. Ransome had been unmoved by the threat contained in the letter.

"It's my misfortune, anyway," said the disappointed lady. "Haven't fully dressed myself so early on a Sunday since I was a kid, and it's been all for nothing." As a concession, she later lent him the newspaper, and gave him two thick

slices of bread and butter for an evening meal.

Mr. Ransome, on the Monday morning, found himself face to face with a crisis that never fails to strike terror into the hearts of indolent folk ; it seemed that he was within measurable distance of being compelled to work for a livelihood. The thought had sometimes come to him in dreams after a late supper, but he felt certain its present appearance could not be imputed to over-feeding. Always living by what he called his wits, he felt an intense objection to relying upon any other means, and he walked down to Chalk Farm in the hope of discovering a suggestion. A shop window containing masks and wigs and tinselled costumes met his eye ; after a moment of hesitation he went in. To the sharp youth in charge he explained that he was arranging a fancy-dress ball at the Athenæum in Camden Road.

“ Where do you live, sir ? ”

Mr. Ransome gave one of his business cards, and went on to point out that many of the people who had taken tickets would come to him and say : “ Look here, this is all very well ; but where the deuce are we to borrow make-up and dresses, and so forth and so on, from ? ” What

he recommended was that the firm should furnish him with something like a sample of their wares—say, an effective beard—and then he could convince applicants that Somers & Co. was the firm to be patronized.

“Right you are,” said the alert youth, taking down some boxes. “Try some of these on.”

He selected one that came nearer to nature than most, and in going, with the cardboard box under his arm, mentioned that this was one of the finest strokes of business the firm had done for many a long day,

Mr. Ransome would have paid his visit to the coal-office at once, but it was necessary that the luncheon-hour should be selected, for then the clerks would be out. He found a free library, and in the shelter of a sloping newspaper-stand fixed the beard. In Hampstead Road, at a second-hand shop, he effected, at a loss, an exchange of clothing; by five minutes past one he had reached the office. As he entered his wife looked up with the smile appropriate for wholesale customers.

“Morning, madam,” he said, in a genial voice that he hoped differed from his usual method

of speaking. "Can you tell me where I shall find Mr. Ransome?"

"Haven't the least idea."

"Then perhaps you can tell me where I can find his wife?"

"You are talking to her," she answered, "now."

He searched an inside pocket, and ejaculated "Bother!" Mrs. Ransome waited for an explanation of this word of regret, and he told her the documents he wished to exhibit had been left behind at Lincoln's Inn. "Fact of the matter is," he went on, "your husband has come into a tidy amount of money, and, although he won't be able to touch it for some time, my people thought he would be glad to know at the earliest possible moment."

"How much?" she inquired.

"So far as my memory serves me, it runs into four or five hundred. Of course certain formalities have to be gone through, but——"

"That will make him quite independent."

"Ye—es," he said doubtfully. "What I should advise him to do, if he asks me, would be to put it into this business. You could rent the place that's to let next door; you could take

on more hands, and eventually turn the whole business into a limited company."

"Sounds attractive," she admitted. "It is just what I've often talked of doing, only I've never had enough capital."

"If you will kindly put yourself into communication with him and arrange a meeting between us, everything can be fixed up without delay. There's no need for me to waste your time, madam."

"But it is a question of wasting your time," she remarked. "You would much rather see him now, I suppose?"

"By the by, you might give me some idea of what he's like. I'm naturally interested in what I may term favourites of fortune."

"He's not much to look at," said Mrs. Ransome, "although, for some reason, I used to think he was. For one thing, he doesn't take enough trouble over his personal appearance. And just of late he seems to be trying to gain a prize for sheer laziness."

"That doesn't sound to me like what a married lady ought to say about her partner."

"Very few married ladies have to say it. I

only mention it because you asked me, and because it happens to be true."

"Are you sure," he inquired, gloomily, "you're not somewhat too hard on him?"

"I should find that difficult. If he'd only go away, and stay away, I should be a great deal happier. But you wanted to see him, didn't you?"

"If it can be managed."

Mrs. Ransome stepped aside to a retired corner where a wash-hand bowl stood. She returned with a small mirror.

"If you take off that beard, James," she remarked, "and glance at this, your desire will be satisfied!"

He strode to the doorway and returned with a distracted air. He looked steadily at her for a few minutes; she returned his gaze.

"How did you guess?" he demanded.

"They telephoned through from the shop in Chalk Farm to find out if it was all right."

"My dear!" he cried. "What is to be done with a woman like you? I've tried all ways to make an impression on your mind, and nothing seems to answer. And if you only knew it"—

here he broke down—"I'm just about as hungry as a hunter."

"My lunch is on the table in there," she said, pointing. "You can have half of it. When that's done, you've got to gain your living if you want to keep alive." She turned aside, and her voice softened. "We used to be fond of each other, James, once."

"We will again," declared Mr. Ransome, definitely. "In the future I'm going to be a different man."

"That's something. But I'd rather you promised to be a better one."

"It's what I meant to say," he explained. "Give us a smile, like a dear old girl."

"Earn it first!" she directed.

THE AWKWARD SITUATION

JANE arrived from Sussex with a brown-paper parcel tied by about thirty pieces of string, and in less than a year she had in her room at the top of the house a brown trunk as good as anything I possessed. She was saving too in regard to domestic details; a leg of mutton always finished as an Irish stew, a mince was the last word of a shoulder of veal. A better cook I never wished to meet, and I do believe my husband, Mr. Hertford, meant it when he said that she could earn good money in a City restaurant; I warned him not to talk too loudly. What I liked about Jane was that she never gave back answers. I used to pitch into her now and again to stop her from asking for more money and to prevent her from having too high an opinion of herself, and no matter what I said to her she only nodded. At other times I gave the girl advice. Counselling her not to talk to tradesmen, recommended her to be very careful about chance

acquaintances, urged her to come straight to me if any one seemed inclined to pay attentions.

"Yes, 'm," promised Jane.

"And if you ever get a note by the post that you can't understand the meaning of, bring it and let me have a glance."

"Very well, 'm."

When Mr. Hertford was placed in charge of the West End branch we moved into a larger house, and Jane was transferred with the rest of the furniture; I can see her now sitting on the low tailboard of the last van, the canary cage in her arms. I told young Mellish, whose father contracted for the removal, to take good care of her. At Highbury New Park I feared there would be trouble because we had to take a second girl; plenty of servants can work well enough alone, but once somebody else comes into the kitchen they fly all to pieces. Jane survived that test. She was amiable with the nurse who stayed for the month, and later with the girl who was engaged to look after baby; the others came and went, but Jane stood like the Roman soldier in the picture that used to be in the drawing-room until Mr. Hertford began to buy at the Royal

Academy. Baby would be good with Jane when no one else could manage her. Mr. Hertford at about this time joined a club in St. James's Street, but after trying the food there once or twice he decided to go on dining at home in the evening. We were invited out a good deal—I didn't care for it, but Mr. Hertford said you had to keep in with useful people—and when the time came that he had to ask people in return, all I did was to go down into the kitchen and say, "Jane, we shall have ten to dinner this evening."

"Right you are, 'm."

"What shall we give them in the way of eating?"

"Better leave it to me, 'm, if you don't mind."

My Aunt Laura popped off on an October the twentieth. I shall never forget the date so long as I live because it was that day young Mellish called and the housemaid said he wanted to see me on particular business. I sent back a message that the bill for moving had been settled a couple of years previously. The maid brought word that he had not called about an account, and I asked her to tell him that his father had better come round. His answer was to the effect that

his late father could not leave Abney Park Cemetery.

"Sorry to trouble you, ma'am," he said, entering the room, "but I want to marry your Jane."

"Are you mad?" I asked, staring at him coldly.

"Yes," he replied; "mad with love. Right up to the neck in fact. Never had it so strong before, and being now in charge of the business I'd like to settle down and get it all over as soon as possible."

"If you're wise," I said severely, "you will remain single for a good many years longer and take time to look around you. There's more harm resulting from early marriages than a presentable young man like yourself can imagine. Besides, if I were you I should aim at some one higher up in the social scale."

"If you were me," he said, speaking, I must admit, quite respectfully, "you'd probably follow the dictates of your own heart, and I've come to you, ma'am, after throwing out a hint or two to Jane herself because I don't want a customer to have a grudge against me, and it seems only fair you should have time to look about and get some one to take her place."

"My dear sir," I cried, "that's perfectly impossible. You don't realize what a valuable girl Jane is."

"It's just because I've got a pretty fair idea of what she's worth that I'm going to make a definite proposal to her."

"But there are so many good-looking ones about."

"I don't want good looking," he said; "I want good cooking. My digestion isn't what it ought to be, and people chaff me because I'm growing thin."

"Look here, my lad," I remarked warmly, "you're not going to rob me of Jane, so don't you think it. If you've got anything wrong with your inside, go to a chemist's and get it put right. Apart from that, Jane knows when she's well off. I saw her Post Office book only yesterday, and I know just how much she's put by."

"By suggesting," he said, taking up his hat, "that I want her for the sake of money I consider you've insulted me, and I am now about to leave your house, ma'am, never to enter it again."

"If you do," I retorted, "I shall whistle for the police."

I am not one of your fainting women, but if I had been I know very well what would have happened. I went through the whole of the conversation after he had gone, and here and there I could see where I had made slips, but on the whole I felt glad I had given way to my temper. I sent for Jane when I had become cool and collected, and told her young Mellish called to find out how much she had saved. I mentioned that he seemed greatly annoyed when I declined to give information.

"You have to be very careful in your dealings with men, Jane. If you're handsome, why, of course, they may love you for yourself alone, but if you're not you may be sure it's your money they're after."

"I expect you'd know, 'm."

"Your best plan will be to tell him that you've had to pay away all your savings to get a relative out of trouble."

"If you please, 'm, I haven't got any relatives."

"Surely," I urged, "surely you've intelligence enough to invent an uncle or to imagine an aunt?"

"I'll try, 'm."

"And promise me one thing, Jane. Promise me you'll never leave me unless I ask you to do so. Promise me that for the sake of old times!"

She paused for a moment.

"Very well, 'm."

I knew she would keep her word.

There had been many advantages during the past in the fact that Jane was a country girl; at this moment circumstances made it necessary that I should take charge of the management. It was a subject I could not discuss with Mr. Hertford, for some time previously when I spoke to him about getting rid of the new nurse he made a suggestion that he shouldn't never trouble me about business worries, and that I, in return, should not worry him concerning domestic troubles. I wrote a line to young Mellish and said that I regretted one or two hasty remarks I had made; would he please meet me outside the Marlborough Theatre at five o'clock the next evening. There, walking along the semi-circle away from the road, I took up a different manner. I said I was not one to stand in any girl's way, and that if I thought he and Jane were likely to make a happy pair I would not interpose for

a single moment. But I had been acquainted with Jane, I said, for a considerable period, and it was my duty to tell him all I knew about her. I think I managed to convey to young Mellish the impression that I had taken Jane out of pure charity, and that nothing but benevolence induced me to continue to be burdened with her ; inability to tell the truth was mentioned as one of the smallest of her defects.

"There," he said respectfully, "I think you are to some extent correct. She gave me information regarding her savings and what she had done with them, and I find upon investigation there's no foundation for her statement. When I see her next I shall make it my business to ascertain who put her up to the idea."

"You really mean to say after all I've told you that you are going to see her again? Consider what you know about her now."

"Every girl has got some drawback."

At home I discovered a letter from the lawyers saying that my poor Aunt Laura had left £20 to me, and with a sudden inspiration I went to the telephone and rang up young Mellish, taking care to first close the study door. At the start

he wanted to refrain from discussing the matter further, but I talked reasonably and he consented not to ring off. I said that I could see it was all a question of money, and I asked him what was the lowest sum he was prepared to take; he protested against this view, but I did presently induce him to mention an amount. I told him this figure was altogether out of the question and suggested another; eventually we met about half-way, and I repeated to him, very distinctly the terms of the agreement. He remarked that he would let me have it in writing, and I said good-bye very pleasantly. It was then I found that it was not sufficient to close a door to ensure privacy; the lock should also be turned.

"Please, 'm," said Jane from the doorway, "your dressmaker is waiting downstairs."

My mind was so full of other matters that the dressmaker complained I was not showing my usual interest in the preliminaries. The letter came from young Mellish promising formally not to see Jane without my permission, and asking for the £25 cheque. This relieved my anxiety.

Mr. Hertford dined at the club on three suc-

cessive nights, offering a different excuse for each occasion. Partly because I felt in a good temper over Jane, and partly because I was being careful about my food in consequence of a remark made by my dressmaker, I took no notice of this, but when on the fourth morning as he was going off Mr. Hertford again said that he would not be home to dinner, and hesitated when I inquired the reason, I spoke rather sarcastically, suggesting that any one who was ~~doublefaced~~ had better have one meal at the club and another at home.

"If you must know, my dear," said my husband desperately, "the cooking here has suddenly gone all wrong."

I talked to Jane. I remonstrated with Jane. I almost went down on my knees to Jane. One might as well have appealed to a brick wall. She was acting for the best, she declared, speaking in her stolid way, and no girl could do more. Perhaps she had lost the knack of it; if she failed to give satisfaction there was an alternative, and she was ready to take a month's notice or a month's pay. I induced Mr. Hertford to give the meals one more trial, and I am bound to

confess there were good grounds for the language he used.

I met Mr. and Mrs. Mellish the other afternoon on the North London; Jane looked quite happy, and her husband had also changed wonderfully in appearance. He held to the rack for a time, and when two passengers alighted at Dalston Junction, he took their places.

FAMILY TREES

"**D**IDN'T quite catch that last remark," said the lad, turning an ear in the direction. "Might just give it to me again, sir."

"I said," he complied, speaking from the hearthrug with great distinctness, "I told you that if I have achieved any sort of success in the world—have you got that?—I attribute it to the fact that I come from the middle classes."

"Not the upper?"

"The middle classes," he repeated loudly. "You can add, if you like, that in my opinion England has to look for its leaders and its notable men to the division of society known under that title. The day of the aristocracy has gone, the day of the labourer is not yet here. Now," in more genial tones, "let me hear what you've put down."

The young representative of London journalism went across to the window and read the notes, sometimes unable to make them accord with

sense, and compelled to appeal for elucidation ; sometimes arrested by the subject of the interview for an amendment to be made. Born in Arlington Road, Regent's Park ; not Camden Town. Father, a shopkeeper ; not a shop assistant. Educated at City of London School ; not City of London College. Date of birth to be omitted ; say, instead, now on the right side of forty.

" Both parents dead ? "

" I regret to say, yes."

" Sorry," said the newspaper lad. " Anything else you'd like me to mention, sir ? "

" You can say"—walking up and down the room, and using a certain amount of gesture with the right arm—" that it is impossible to converse with me for more than five minutes——"

The other raised his pencil in courteous protest.

" Without feeling assured that here is a man to whom, as some poet has remarked, ' The rank is but the guinea stamp.' "

" Burns, I believe ? "

" You needn't drag in other people's names."

" Very much obliged to you," said the lad, taking his hat, " for so kindly receiving me and giving up your valuable time."

"Not at all, not at all. Have a cigarette?"

"There's one more favour I should like to ask, if it isn't taking too great a liberty. Gentleman friend of mine collects autographs, and if you——"

"Anything in reason," he interrupted, with decision, "but I've had to stop that. Quite impossible! Entirely out of the question. Are these your gloves?"

He touched the bell, and, having seen the youth to the door, transferred him there to the charge of a servant. Returning, he stretched his arms, looked at himself with a bachelor's interest in the mirror, and took up the half-dozen post letters that had arrived during the interview. Five of these found their contents thrown casually upon the table, although two brought cheques; the last caused him to whistle excitedly.

"Am I," reading the letter again, "am I by chance related to the great Devonshire family of the same name, whose members fought so gallantly, and to whom Drake once referred in glowing terms? An answer at my convenience will oblige, Helen Drayton." He tried to light a cigarette, but the match would not behave sanely.

"Did you call, sir?" asked the maid, at the doorway.

"Send some one to Mudie's at once, and tell him to bring back three volumes, any three volumes, concerning the Armada. Tell him to take these three to exchange. Tell him to take a cab. Tell him to come straight back. The Spanish Armada."

He went to the bookcase and found Green's History, blew dust from the edges, and turned to Queen Elizabeth. The subject was not one with which he could claim a full and complete acquaintance, and he read with eagerness, turning over pages in search; years of practice had enabled him in opening a newspaper to detect his own name immediately. He presently replaced Green in its place with a force that indicated disappointment, and went along the shelves in search of a fuller and a more complete historian. Twice he went out to inquire whether Fleming had returned, and when Fleming did arrive asked him, with sarcasm, whether he had to wait whilst the books were being printed.

"I was took off me job in the garden," began Fleming.

"Don't talk so much," commanded his master, undoing the strap. "Do you happen to know Devonshire at all?"

"Ealing Broadway is as far as I've been in that direction."

"Ever heard of any one, besides myself, bearing my name?"

"I ain't," replied Fleming. Adding as he went out: "Thank goodness!" He went down into the kitchen to tell the folk there about golden days when he was in service at St Albans, in the household of one who was a gentleman born and gentleman bred.

The Armada appeared to be treated at great length by those who had studied the period, but all had been guilty of an unpardonable omission—one that, in the reader's opinion, rendered their work little short of valueless. The secretary arrived, and he was tempted to throw the books at him; he refrained, demanding, however, a full explanation of tardiness and inquiring what the secretary imagined £150 a year was paid for. The secretary gave a non-committal shrug, and took a chair at the table to begin work.

"Don't sit down," ordered his employer. "Can't you see I'm worried?"

The secretary answered he had detected this, but that he did not feel that the taking of a seat would decrease it.

"Find the A B C. Trace out the next train to Plymouth."

A very good train to Plymouth left Paddington at eleven-thirty; restaurant-car attached.

"I never knew a man," he declared testily, "who attached so much importance to food. Am I over-estimating your intelligence, Spensley, when I assume that you know my name?"

The secretary replied that it might be taken his range of knowledge included the detail.

"Then catch that train to Plymouth. Discover, without a moment's delay, the leading authorities there on county families. Ascertain, Spensley, all about one bearing my name, and wire me; wire me the particulars before five o'clock."

The secretary said of this that it would be quick work.

"Exactly what I want it to be. Here's a five-pound note. Be off, and do the best you can. Your situation depends upon it." He followed the young man out of the room. "I don't mean

that, of course ; all I want you to do, my dear chap, is to help me at a time of very considerable importance. Wire me before five o'clock, mind. That gives you a full hour to make inquiries."

The ladies of the kitchen did not want to think that master had taken leave of his senses, but even cook, the oldest retainer, had to admit that the housekeeper, when she returned from her holiday, ought to be told. Master was on the lawn, making desperate blows at nothing with a croquet mallet. Master proceeded from this to the swing, where he went up into the air in a manner that reminded the housemaid of Blackheath on the very first Monday in August. Master found the lawn-mower and dragged it along the gravel path. Master took a piece of wood and threw it several times into the branches of a tree, and when his efforts succeeded, drilled a hole through the fallen chestnut carefully, threading this with a piece of string knotted at the end. Master picked up, with a great air of industry, fallen leaves, made a mound of them, and, calling Fleming, ordered that a match should be set.

" And him," cook said, " him generally so fixed and precise in his habits ! "

"He ought to get married."

"Don't know who'd 'ave him," remarked cook thoughtfully.

"I don't know who wouldn't!" retorted the housemaid warmly. "He's only got to hold up his hand, and they'd come flying from all four quarters."

"I meant that I didn't know who'd have him who was what you may call worthy of him."

Their master, discouraged by Fleming's flat refusal to allow the joy and excitement of a bonfire, retired to his study and set the writing-desk in order. The inkstand here, the open blotting-pad there, a new nib; ~~nothing remained~~ but to start his day's work. This, scarcely to his astonishment, he found extremely difficult. Through his head danced gay possibilities. He could see himself seated at friendly dinner-tables; he, who had hitherto bragged of lowly origin, could hear himself luring the conversation on from Shakespeare and the musical glasses to Queen Elizabeth, from Elizabeth to the Armada—and then the bombshell.

"By the bye"—the business would consist of cracking a walnut carelessly—"I don't know

whether I happened to mention it, but an ancestor of mine was the man who really defeated the Spanish. Others received the principal share of the credit, but he was the leading spirit. It appears from the records that——”

Likely enough he might end by becoming a bore, but that would only be repayment for much he had endured ; and he knew well enough that the real bore was the happiest man in the world, always under the impression that he was a deucedly interesting fellow, and ever able to command an audience of some kind. Besides, a bore on ancestry had to be looked upon as a good-class bore ; those of less fortunate birth felt that in associating with him they were playing the part of respectability, whereas a man who announced that his grandfather had been carried off his legs by an enthusiasm for mutton always created the shiver that reference to an execution makes.

There ought to be some portraits about in corners ; he would have to give a commission to a dealer who knew the likely places and could scent them. Better than references to the shop would it be to say to interviewers :

“ That portrait you’re looking at was my

great-great-grandfather. You may be interested to know that in the year 1588——”

An easy matter would be to collect engravings of the period. Howard of Effingham, Hawkins, Frobisher could hang upon the walls. Being alone, and unable to work, he took his walking-stick and made desperate lunges at imaginary opponents, seeking out vulnerable parts of the body and performing deeds of extraordinary courage.

“Blood will tell !” he remarked, returning the walking-stick to its place.

Lunch he could only regard with a casual air, and the maid anticipated the hour for tea by bringing it up at half-past three. No, she said ; no telegram arrived. A lady had called, but confessed she had not an appointment and had been sent away, with the information that the master was not at home. He declared this unauthorized and irregular, and when the maid pleaded she had but complied with standing orders, he argued that a certain discretion should be used ; there was no rule in this world which special circumstances did not break. If the lady called again, her card must be taken and brought up ; it was for him

to decide whether he would see her or not. For all he knew, for all anybody knew, she might be the bearer of important information. The girl said, in excuse, that she had asked for the name, and the name given was Miss Drayton.

"The very person!" he cried exasperatedly, throwing a piece of toast on the carpet. "Upon my word, I seem to be surrounded by the stupidest—I would have given fifty pounds to have seen her. I'd lay fifty sovereigns on that table at the present moment if I could see her."

"I took her address as well, sir, and I could easily send a wire."

"No," he said, after consideration—"no. It isn't worth while to waste sixpence. I'll wait until a telegram comes from Plymouth."

The first telegram from Plymouth came in good time. An industrious youth, the secretary; very little pasture was allowed to grow under his shoes.

"Am on the track," said the first telegram.

Nothing could be more satisfactory. The telegram, placed upon the mantelpiece, beamed encouragingly whenever he glanced at it. He hummed a cheerful air.

"Have found the right man," said Spensley's second communication.

Better than ever. He could see Spensley interrogating some erudite person, bringing out the facts and rushing off to obtain in another quarter confirmatory evidence. These young men who had been called to the Bar, though they had never practised, yet possessed a certain trick of cross-examination which served usefully at times. If he ever married, and if he ever had a son, that son should be brought up to know something about the law.

"Investigation still proceeding."

This appeared, for some reason, less hopeful. No need to telegraph this unless some hitch had occurred; it might be taken as an attempt to pave the way for disappointment. He read the telegram several times, and at length persuaded himself it meant nothing. The case remained in its former state. The next wire would be more decisive.

"Unable to find any trace whatever. Shall I stay till to-morrow?"

He should have gone himself. Perfectly futile to send an acknowledged failure like Spensley to undertake delicate inquiries. He might have known the young idiot would fail. Worse than

useless in ordinary affairs, Spensley would in a case of this kind be a mere babe in arms. Where was the time-table ?

"That lady has called again, sir."

"Can't see her!" he replied impatiently.

"I am going off to Devonshire."

"I'll tell the young lady."

"Young?" he said. "Oh, show her in! I'll give her three minutes. She may be able to throw some light on the subject."

Undeniably a very charming young person, and shy, too. He liked reserve in a woman. She stammered at first, and when he begged her to ~~take~~ ^{take} her time managed to convey that she had only called to see if there was an answer to her letter. She wanted the answer; wanted it very much.

"Don't be agitated," he said gently. "Pray sit down and calm yourself. Now, I see how it is. You have heard of me."

"Yes," she faltered.

"And you know somebody who bears the same name—some one perhaps of whom you are fond?"

"No, no!" she said decidedly.

"At any rate, you have reason to believe that I am connected with a great, historic family?"

"I am so sorry!" cried the girl. "I know it was wrong of me; but I only—I only wanted your autograph."

* * * * *

"That's a good face," remarked the secretary some weeks later.

His failure at Plymouth had been pardoned; it was cook who said of the household that it seemed to be going now like clockwork.

"She is a good girl," replied Spensley's master, with enthusiasm. "Don't think you have seen her yet. She called here that afternoon you were away. Spensley, I've something to tell you." He whispered.

"Congratulations, sir," said the secretary, offering his hand.

"If a man hasn't any ancestors," announced the other authoritatively, "the best plan he can adopt is to become an ancestor himself. Let the news of my engagement creep into the public journals, Spensley."

COLONIAL INTELLIGENCE

MR. POYNTER, concluding his Saturday purchase of chocolates, mentioned as usual that if the small parcel did not gratify his young lady then she must be considered as one hard to please. To Miss Welby's question he answered that he had experienced a fairly busy week—two days had been spent by him at Clerk-enwell Sessions House.

"You detective gentlemen are never ones to talk about your own affairs," remarked Miss Welby. "Me, I'm diff'rent. I get so into the habit of chatting with customers that I don't seem to keep no secrets from nobody. Half the people who come into this shop ask me whether I've heard lately from Australia."

"Hard luck on you that he should stay over there for so long," said Mr. Poynter. "I don't know whether it's quite fair of him to expect you to keep single for his sake. You're not half a bad-looking woman in your way and——"

"I never encourage attentions," she said precisely. "When I opened this shop with the money father left me, I made up my mind I wouldn't let anything interfere with business. Apart from which, of course, there's the question of giving one's word. If Mr. Twinan should come back and find I was married to some one else he'd simply go down to Waterloo Bridge, and it would all come out in the papers. Mr. Poynter," she went on pathetically, "I could never endure anything like a public scandal."

"I quite see your point of view. Only if you don't mind me giving you a word of advice, miss—it's a liberty I know—"

"No one has a better right, Mr. Poynter, except, of course, Mr. Twinan, and he's too far off to give it. I assure you I quite look forward to your visits on Saturday evenings."

Mr. Poynter had some trouble in regaining the thread of his argument. He turned away to avoid being disturbed by Miss Welby's eyes and faced the tobacco counter.

"My word of advice would be not to talk too much about yourself. It's a mistake to confide in everybody. In my profession we get to know

the value of secrecy. I hope you'll forgive me, but—well, it seems to be the only defect in an otherwise——” Detective Poynter left the sentence unfinished, and, remarking that his sweetheart did not like to be kept waiting, left.

She heard some one on the pavement say, “That’s it. That’s the shop she runs.” A moment later a man entered and inquired respectfully if he could see a lady of the name of Welby. Miss Welby said he was now enjoying that privilege. Could he speak a few words to her alone? Miss Welby said he need not feel perturbed by the cardboard figure of a girl smoking a Virginian cigarette. Had the lady ever heard of a place called Perth; not the one in Scotland, but situated on the other side of the globe? Miss Welby rose from her stool and leaned across the counter.

“I can’t beat about the bush,” he said. “I’ve had to do it in a sense in my time, but now it’s altogether foreign to my nature. Look here, miss; I met your friend, Mr. Twinan, out there.”

“Is he quite well?” she asked eagerly. “Is he getting on all right? Did he send any message for me?”

"He came into the hotel where I was staying," said the other, speaking carefully. "We fell into conversation, and I mentioned I came from this part of London and that I was returning shortly. He said, 'When you get back go to Miss Welby, who keeps a tobacconist's and a confectioner's shop in Lamb's Conduit Street, and give her my fondest love.' "

"Did he really say that ? "

"You surely don't imagine," said the man with an injured air, "that I'm not giving it to you word for word ? Do I look like any one who could make all that up out of his own head ? "

A customer entered, and she had to go to the opposite side of the establishment.

"There's another little matter," said the man, when the customer had filled his pouch and left. "It's only a trifle, but I think it's fair to mention it. On his suggestion—it was your friend, Mr. Twinan, that proposed it—we had a game of cards and I won a matter of five pounds from him."

"He promised me faithfully he'd never play nap."

"That explains why he was so upset when he had to ask me to come here and request you to

pay the amount. 'Tell her,' he says, 'that it's a debt of honour, and I trust to her to clear my reputation.' "

"Have you got anything in writing?"

"He gave me an I O U, but it's in my trunk, and that's being kept back by my late landlady."

"Produce the document and I'll give the matter my consideration. At present all I have to say to you is that you can hop off out of this shop soon as ever you like, and I don't care if I never see your ugly face again."

"I'm wearing the features," he said, "that I was invested with by Nature, and you're likely to see them on a good many future occasions. I shall make it my duty to call in here whenever the place looks crowded, and in the presence of everybody I shall make it clear that you've refused to comply with a request made by the gentleman you profess to be fond of, and the one you allege yourself to be engaged to." He lifted a hand impressively. "If it makes talk round the neighbourhood, don't blame me. Good-morning."

Miss Welby was about early the following morning because she had been unable to gain a fair night's rest. Business was always quiet in the

first hours of Sunday, and she devoted much of the time to straightening contents of shelves on either side of the shop. Customers looked in, greatly pressed, for an ounce of Log Cabin or a packet of Waverley ; a few girls called for chocolate, but no one had any leisure for conversation. Miss Welby, on the top rung of a ladder, observed that a new arrival made no appeal for quick serving, and consoled herself with the hope that here was some one with whom she could chat for ten minutes. Finishing her task, she descended.

" You here again ? " she said coldly.

" Didn't I tell you I sh'd call round again pretty of'en ? Have I lost any time in doing so ? "

" Very funny thing," she remarked, " that you should have mentioned Mr. Twinan when you called yesterday evening. A few minutes after you had gone I had a letter from him."

" Did he mention anything about that little amount he owed me ? "

" Oddly enough there was nothing about it."

" That seems strange," he remarked, looking at her keenly.

" But it had some good news," said Miss Welby, meeting his gaze with composure. " He's coming

home. He's arriving by the steamer following the one that brought his letter, so if you don't mind allowing the matter to stand over for a while——"

"No," he cried, slapping the counter. "That affair's going to be settled to-day. I want the money badly and I'm going to have it. I can't afford to wait."

"You're a scoundrel," declared Miss Welby.

"Even if I am," he retorted, "I'm entitled to find common honesty in other people."

A customer entered, and begged Miss Welby to fill his cigar case. She spoke to him of the necessity of repapering her sitting-room, and the intrusive visitor stepped forward.

"Well," he said roughly, "are you going to pay up or are you not? Let's have a definite decision one way or the other."

"What is all this?" inquired Miss Welby's landlord apprehensively. "No money trouble, I hope?"

"A very trifling affair," said Miss Welby, turning pale. "I hope to settle it in the course of the day. If you," turning to the resolute man, "if you will call at three o'clock I'll have

everything ready for you." He went reluctantly.

"Any news from Australia?" inquired the landlord, regaining his ordinary manner.

"Not just lately," she replied. "Expect I shall be hearing shortly. Looks as though we're going to have a fine day, doesn't it?"

Miss Welby at the doorway that Sunday morning summoned every policeman who went by and gave an urgent message for Mr. Poynter. She could think of no one else so capable of giving assistance, and she trembled to think of what would happen if he failed to come to her aid. At twelve o'clock arrived the woman who prepared meals and performed some desultory household work.

Constables looked in to say that they had seen nothing of their plain-clothes colleague. The odd woman, a good cook, whatever her failings in other respects, complained that Miss Welby did no sort of justice to the meal, and was but moderately soothed by the flattering request that she would take charge of the shop for half-an-hour. Miss Welby put on her hat and light cloak, and hailing a motor omnibus in Holborn took the step of proceeding to Mr. Poynter's address. Seemingly the

policemen had not thought of this plan ; Mr. Poynter's landlady announced that he was in, but it was worth more than her life to disturb him.

" But does no one ever call to see Mr. Poynter ? "

" No," replied the landlady curtly, " no one don't."

" Not 'even his young lady ? "

" He ain't got a young lady. And what's more he don't want one. He belongs to the sensible kind, Mr. Poynter does. Never bothers his head about 'em."

Miss Welby went into the passage and opened the door on the right. In the room Mr. Poynter sat, one hand grasping his hair, the other holding a pen ; his face had a frown of perplexity.

" Busy ? " she inquired.

" Only writing poetry," he admitted.

" I've got a brainier job than that for you."

Mr. Poynter, at the shop in Lamb's Conduit Street, brought a screen from the back parlour, borrowed a chair, and sat in ambush. As the church clock struck three, the man whose presence was expected and feared entered. Miss Welby coughed, rose from her side of the counter to greet him.

"Third time for luck," he announced breezily. "You might just as well have settled the first time I called. I knew all along you'd pay up and look pleasant in the end; worst of you ladies is you like to put off what I may term the inevitable. Now, I sh'd rather like, once this monetary business is settled, that our acquaintance should open into——"

"You say that you met Mr. Twinan out at Perth?"

"I did."

"He's never been in the place in all his life."

"How do you know?" he demanded. "Besides, if it wasn't Perth it was some other town. Now then, let's have the money. I've had enough of your nonsense. You told me you had a letter from him Sat'd'y night. I was here long after the last delivery, so that was a lie. Now, with me, it's different." He put his chin out aggressively. "You can't prove that what I've been saying is wrong."

"Yes, I can."

"Prove it then. Prove it. Go on. Prove it!" He had raised his voice to a shout. She waited for a movement near the screen,

"I've never known any one called Twinan," she announced, trembling. "I made him up out of my own head so that gentlemen customers shouldn't think they could flirt with me."

Mr. Poynter came and took the man's collar, inserting knuckles which pressed well against the back of the neck. Conducted him to the doorway. "Shall I kick you out," he asked, "or would you rather I dispensed with that formality?"

"I can take a 'int," said the man gloomily, "as well as any one."

Mr. Poynter returned to the counter and looked across at the proprietress of the establishment.

"Do you want some chocolates for that young lady of yours?" she inquired.

"Those purchases," he declared stolidly, "were all for myself. I've got a sweet tooth, but my official position being what it is I didn't care to own it. And I say! Don't you think that two humbugs like us might as well make a match of it? We ought to be able to get on well together."

"We can but try."

"That's satisfactory," said Detective Poynter. "And now I needn't trouble about getting a rhyme to your present surname."

PROGRESSIVE FEASTS

MR. MAXTED was in comfortable mood. The Channel crossing had been in favour of passengers, and opposed to the interests of sailors ; the interpreter secured for him at Calais a first-class compartment, into which one or two folk peeped from the corridor, but, noting his proprietorial attitude, did not dare to enter. Mr. Maxted had not taken this journey for about twenty years, but he remembered there was but little to look at on the way.

“ Shan’t be able to sleep,” he said, “ but there is no earthly reason why I shouldn’t think.”

Mr. Maxted found that his thoughts went to a Sunday excursion train bound from London Bridge ; a crowded compartment with himself wedged tightly between his mother and a stout gentleman, who had a flat bottle that the boy wished were in the other pocket. No corridors then, no covering on the wooden seats, the

windows could be up or down, but admitted no intermediate stages. The boy, as the train went out, was not on speaking terms with his parent because she had declined to entertain a most reasonable proposal, offered in crossing the bridge, namely that they should make the journey by boat; her excuse—that the steamer had long since gone—he looked upon as a mere subterfuge. But the passengers on his side contracted as the excursion ran through New Cross, and took less room, and he emerged from obscurity to be received with feigned alarm by travellers opposite.

“Got a stowaway on board,” declared a jovial youth. “Who does he belong to, I wonder?”

“To me,” said Robert Maxted’s mother promptly and defiantly, “and he’s got every bit as good a right to be here as any one else. Had to take half a ticket for him anyway. Same as what you’ve got, I expect.”

“I’ve got a whole ticket.”

“Fancy!” said the mother, with surprise. “Of course I was only judging from your conversation.”

This swift, sharp bout seemed to clear the air of everything like reserve; two parties were

formed, one saying there was no harm in a mild joke, and that friendly chaff helped to shorten a journey ; the other declaring people should abstain from interfering with matters which did not concern them, and that if you were not to be allowed to defend your own son, why then, the sooner the world came to an end, the better. Those who supported the Maxteds declared the boy had a nice open countenance and said he evidently favoured his mother : Mrs. Maxted, finding a handkerchief in her reticule, assured them he was the living image of his poor dear father. Refreshments were produced from paper parcels, and from shiny leather bags, and a member of the opposition, in the interests of peace, offered the boy a thin sandwich ; he refused this, and accepted a large meat patty from one of his own supporters. Conversation went to the recent war, and the two parties re-formed into pro-French and pro-Prussians ; the boy's mother found herself in accord with the views expressed by the young man who had first spoken ; they agreed it was a cruel shame to turn Napoleon the Third out of his own country. The train went through Chislehurst, and a rush was made

to the windows in the hope of catching sight of the ex-Emperor. The young man, in returning, took a seat next to Mrs. Maxted, and inviting her opinion on London cemeteries, mentioned that his name was Atkinson.

"Can't we have a sing-song or something to liven us up?" asked the stout man, now in the corner. He had taken sips from the flask, prefacing them by various sentiments, such as "Here's to our next disappointment!" and "May we have all the ill luck we deserve!" and appeared to have come to an end of ironical toasts. "Ain't there any lady present with a voice that can be guaranteed not to stop the train?"

•

One or two of the women said they could sing, and often did sing, but only in rooms; not in railway carriages. The stout man, looking around, selected a girl, and addressing her as The Swedish Nightingale, begged her to open the concert. The girl, after sufficient exhibition of modesty, was giving way to the persuasion of her young man, when the train entered Sevenoaks tunnel; passengers gave an "Oh!" of alarm. The boy, frightened when the darkness had lasted

for about three minutes, tried to find his mother's hand, and when he touched it discovered it was already engaged: as the train came out into the broad sunlight, he heard his mother say, in an undertone, "Do be careful. The boy's so sharp: he notices everything!" Ladies of the compartment blinked, and declared, flutteringly, it was ridiculous of the railway company to make the line under the ground in this fashion.

The stout man himself volunteered a song, full of wise and generous precepts, called "Never push, a man when he's going down the hill"; he became tearful in chanting detailed instructions in behaviour towards those in distress. Mrs. Maxted—now on amiable terms with the entire company—received a compliment from her neighbour—

"Black suits you, ma'am."

"Ah, but you ought to see me in pink!"

—And ordered her boy to contribute to the programme, assuring the rest that, when in the mood, he could sing as well as any Christy Minstrel. Room was made that he might stand upon the seat, and being rescued from disaster as the train took the curve near Tunbridge, he started in a shrill voice, not displeasing to the ear—

*" Just touch the harp gently, my pretty Louise,
And sing me the songs that I love ;
They recall the bright days when——"*

Now and again, he hesitated for a word which his proud mother furnished, and once, by error, he began a repetition of a verse ; for the rest, the song proved a great success, and the compartment enjoyed it the more because they made, in the chorus, experiments in part singing : the youth next to his mother coming out in an amazingly high falsetto key. Complying with requests, the boy sang again, and gave—

*" Do not trust him, genile lady,
Though his voice be soft and true."*

And this, too, was well received, although gentlemen of the compartment thought it not quite equal, in literary merit, to the first.

They were at St. Lawrence before they knew they had passed by Canterbury, and tickets had to be found, and given up. At the destination, the compartment was disinclined to break friendship, and Mr. Atkinson recommended they should keep together throughout the day, but Mrs. Maxted said she had come down for rest and quiet, and

slipped away with her boy. Along at the far end, they took off shoes and stockings and paddled; Mrs. Maxted said that sea-bathing was urgently recommended by medical authorities as the finest thing for building up the constitution. By rare good luck, Robert found a spade, and, with this, he dug out a shallow circular pit in the sands, and, at one o'clock precisely, they took lunch. Such a good lunch! There was in the basket a cold rabbit pie with a thick, reliable crust that served at first for plates; the chasing of the lumps of jelly was at once a meal and a pastime; they found the wish-bone, and Robert succeeded in gaining the larger half. Some of the home rules were slackened, and his mother quoted a notable statement, attributed to their own Queen Victoria, to the effect that fingers were made before forks. A large round cake of a satisfying nature and peppered with carraway seeds; a bottle of water (so faintly flavoured with cooking sherry, that Mrs. Maxted said even these mad scatter-brained teetotallers could find no objection to it); unexpectedly, a paper bag, the contents of which had stuck, but this was an advantage because in taking one sweet—a black striped bulls-eye that

gave the consumer the appearance of enjoying an attack of toothache—you really took three, without appearing in the least greedy, or breaking any rule of table etiquette. Mrs. Maxted said one half would be kept for the journey home, but her son protested, and she gave in, urging him to beware a tendency to hoggishness. He begged to be excused from formalities; on this point she was firm. He placed the palms of his hands together, and closed his eyes; his mother said “Amen!”

They sat and gazed at the waves with the stare of repletion. The mother explained to Mr. Atkinson, when he found them, the broad difference between sleeping and mere dozing.

“

A jump, a wide jump, and, in some senses, a high one, and he saw himself stepping out of Windermere station, and inquiring the way to Bowness and the lake. No, he did not want his bag carried by anybody but himself; thank you, but he had already secured a room. Yes, the youth knew all about the circular trip by steamer and coach, and felt no desire to purchase rhymes by the Poet Close. He had been saving up since

April for the holiday ; a small note-book in his jacket pocket bore, on the first leaf, the heading " Estimated Expenses " ; the entry for Saturday was heavy because it included the cost of the tourist ticket. Sunday had the amount six-and-six, and some of the remainder of the days went slightly above this sum, some below. His mother had packed food for the journey, but there happened to be two young women in the compartment, and he had not the courage to take the meal in their presence ; Mrs. Atkinson's economical mind would have received a fearful shock if she had known that the package was furtively dropped near Rugby from the window. At Preston, when his fellow-travellers alighted, he regretted his action.

" My name is Maxted," he said, with a truculence that he hoped would conceal nervousness. " Robert Maxted. I wrote to engage an apartment."

" Won't you walk in, sir ? "

He adopted the comfortable-looking woman's suggestion, putting on a frown intended to hint that he was not of those who are easily satisfied.

" Many people about ? " he demanded sharply.

"We mustn't grumble," answered his landlady. "Considering what a lot of rain we get here in the Lake district, I often think it's a wonder so many come as do. I'll show you your room, sir, if you don't mind. It's at the top of the 'ouse."

"I should prefer one on the first floor."

"Very good, sir. Only that will make a difference in the price."

"Perhaps," he admitted, "I shall get more air up there."

The young man could find no fault in the room to which he was taken, but he endeavoured to convey the impression that he could look upon it only as a make-shift. His landlady inquired whether he lived in London, and if so, in what quarter (he had written his communications from office), and he said, at a venture, "Bayswater!" whereupon she threw off the veil of gentle melancholy, and talked of Notting Hill Gate, Pembridge Gardens, Westbourne Grove, and other places with which he had no acquaintance. She had been in service, when young, in Kensington Park Road; Bulmer, her husband, was at the time valet to a north country gentleman, and when they decided to wed, Bulmer made it a provision

they should set up house in Westmoreland ; her own prejudices were in favour of Shepherd's Bush, but in married life you had to give way, sometimes, to the views of your partner.

" And now," she said, re-conducting him down the stairs, " what about dinner, this evening ? Would you like to order it, or will you leave it to me ? "

" Had rather a heavy lunch," he answered importantly, " and I shall not require anything else to-day."

" Very good, sir ! "

It struck him as he walked out towards the lake that there was something very pleasant in being addressed in this respectful way ; in the City there were several folk whom he had to call " Sir," and but few—and these only at shop counters—who gave him the title. His mind once more went over the expenses of the day. Dinner, if taken, would certainly have cost two shillings, possibly half-a-crown, and his resolute decision in this regard might be looked upon as a shrewd exercise of thrift, auguring well for a careful and inexpensive holiday. Tragic stories were told in Bishopsgate Street Without of clerks

who, in their own phrase, ran past themselves when on holiday, finding at the end that they had not enough cash to pay their bill. One youth was held in Cornwall by a determined landlord for three days, until his friends collected and forwarded the amount required for his ransom; another had been compelled to pawn watch and straw hat. All the same, young Maxted began to think once more of the package, tied carefully with white cotton, the contents of which were probably by this time comforting the hunger of a platelayer. He found a small fruiterer's shop, and bought three apples, and, at the side of the lake, munched them. Lights were turned on presently in the dining-room of the hotel, and he could see waiters hurrying to the crowded tables, first with soup, then with fish, then with roast beef, then with junket and greengages. A clergyman, going by, noted his distress and put a well meant question; Robert Maxted answered, snappishly, that it was not his soul that was in trouble.

' In the house, when he returned, there were distracting scents of cooked food, and music was being played in the drawing-room: the landlady,

intercepting him in the hall, suggested he should come and be presented to the other boarders, but he declared himself tired, and anxious for rest.

"What would you like for breakfast in the morning, sir?"

"Anything, Mrs. Bulmer!" he replied, with a careless air. He felt that he might well have said "Everything, Mrs. Bulmer!"

He had brought a work by Mr. Disraeli, whose political memory he revered so much that he determined to cultivate the statesman's fiction: it was called *Lothair*, and, in bed with the candle burning, he started, conscientiously, upon the task. "The tradition of the Anglican Church," he read, "was powerful. Resting on the Church of Jerusalem, modified by the divine school of Galilee, it would have found that rock of truth which Providence, by the instrumentality of the Semitic race, had promised to St. Peter." He went over this several times in the attempt to understand it, and discovered himself perilously near accusing a past leader of the party to which he belonged of a dull style, and, likely enough, a clogged pen.

"Of course!" he cried suddenly. "It isn't literature I want: it's food!"

Sleep did not come. He heard other boarders coming up the stairs ; they said " Good-night ! " rather noisily ; made urgent appeals to each other not to be late for church in the morning. The front door below was bolted ; Mr. and Mrs. Bulmer retired to rest. A desperate notion entered young Maxted's head of putting on slippers, and going quietly down to search for food ; cold ham, cheese, a crust of bread. The fear that he might be shot in mistake for a burglar, arrested action ; an equally effective deterrent was that other boarders might hear of the raid, and chaff him about it during the remainder of his stay.

Robert Maxted's most painful experience was to come. He entered a dining-room where other people were seated, and faced a promising meal with acute appetite. The maids came with well filled plates ; he took his fish knife and fork, and as they touched the fried sole, it disappeared and his plate was empty ; he thought this perplexing, but decided to make no reference to the accident. A mutton chop, neatly trimmed and correctly grilled, was set before him ; as he smiled at it appreciatively, it changed and became nothing

more than a bone. A helping of cherry pie was presented, and before it rested on the table-cloth, the contents vanished, and he could do nothing but count the stones at the side : this year, next year, now, never, this year, next year—— Robert Maxted, thus sorely tried, gave way, and awaking, found his young face wet with tears. A delightful perfume, warm and succulent, came from the ground floor : he glanced at his watch. The business of washing and dressing was effected in less than record time.

" You're first down, sir," announced the admirable landlady in congratulatory tones, " and you can have a go at the fried ham. And the ~~de~~iled kidneys And the fried eggs. And the boiled eggs. And the scrambled eggs. And the home-made jam. And the marmalade. And the fruit on the sideboard. And," appealingly, " I don't like to think of any young gentleman being without an appetite. I do hope you'll summon up your courage, and try, for my sake, to manage to pick a bit."

" I'll do my best, Mrs. Bulmer ! " he promised.

It was years later, and, looking back, it seemed

he was then still young ; he earned now a good salary, but the great advance of his life had not arrived, and habits of thrift were still practised. He was in Paris for his three weeks holiday, with a room at a hotel in the rue d'Antin, where the proprietor did not mind whether you took meals in the small dining-room, or gave patronage to other establishments. Robert Maxted had no friends in Paris, and this he counted an advantage in that it made the days seem longer ; it was also to the good that he was able to control disbursements.

He took coffee and rolls, in a side street well up the Boulevards where the charge was but sixty centimes, as compared with the one franc twenty he had to pay near to the Opera House ; the waiter there was content with five centimes as a tip. I said he had no friends : there was, in fact, one lady who had for him a sincere affection that started on the first day of his arrival. Robert Maxted, going out in search of a place where he could order an economical dinner, found himself in the rue de Rivoli with its covered-in pavement, and shops containing articles that no Parisian thinks of buying ; at a corner he saw a

restaurant and his guide book told him it could be relied upon as cheap and good, the two qualities he specially wanted. He accepted, after some argument, a bill from the gentlemanly man at the desk, took a corner seat near the window, and then she came to him. A matronly person with a slight moustache, her costume made him think of nurses in the hospital where his mother had spent her last days.

"Permit me, monsieur," she said, taking the long and compendious bill of fare upon which he was concentrating his puzzled mind. She touched entries in making her recommendations. Consommé. Raie au beurre noir. Pre-salé. Fromage. Salade. Demi-bouteille de Chablis. Resting knuckles on the white-cloth'd table, she asked, with a look, whether this suited his requirements.

"Merci," he replied, "very much !"

The repast came to exactly the sum he had set aside for dinner ; indeed, the restaurant had this advantage that his lady friend marked with a coloured pencil the bill form as each dish came, and he was able to reckon, without difficulty, the progress of the account. Robert Maxted had

intended to make experiments in feeding during his stay at Paris ; he desired to go back to the City and talk, in a mysterious way, of some astonishing little place over on the other side of the Seine, where the best and finest cooking was to be found, at prices ridiculously small : considering the matter very fully, he decided he could not do better than trust himself to his friend in the rue de Rivoli. Sometimes, the daring idea came to him of going to a similar restaurant facing the Madeleine, or one in the rue St. Honoré, or another in the Boulevard Michel, but thought of the motherly woman who always took the duty of paying his account, and bringing back the exactly correct change, induced him to ~~return~~ return to his early love.

It was on the last day of his holiday that, reckoning in the Luxembourg gardens his expenses, and finding a satisfactory margin remained, he determined to give himself a special luxury ; this would have the advantage of enabling him to escape the pain of farewell to his friend in the rue de Rivoli. He took no lunch but wandered for some time along the arcades of the Odéon, looked at second-hand books, and making no

purchases, partly because he feared to be taken in; those with a serious title did not attract him, and contents of volumes with other titles might not prove so engaging as they promised. Robert Maxted went back to the gallery, inspected once more the pictures, said good-bye to favourites in the sculpture hall. Again in the gardens, he found the band playing, and, putting all thrift aside, took a wicker-seated chair, and paid his penny to the woman collector. Two girls near, in the cycling costume then worn, smiled at him, and he smiled in return, and felt himself to be a blade of the finest temper.

"Half a mind to go across and kiss you both," he said, under his breath.

He was not acquainted with any establishment near where he could obtain tea, and the walk down to Neal's seemed too far. Thus it was that, at seven o'clock, he was ready for the great meal, although he had fixed upon half-past seven as the correct hour; his desire for food was indeed so great that he could wait no longer. The board outside the quiet-looking restaurant which he, during the afternoon, had found, said "*Cuisine et Vins renommés pour la Ville*"; he had searched

the window for some more precise information but could find none. The circumstance at first discouraged him : now it seemed only to give the experiment the quality of daring. He had scarcely entered before a waiter took his hat and stick ; another escorted him up a few steps to another room where a third presented, with respect, the bill of fare, and a fourth stood by ready to offer the wine list.

“ Good gracious ! ” ejaculated Robert Maxted.

He had become so much accustomed to dishes at sixty centimes and seventy-five centimes that the figures on the sheet before him seemed to him to partake of the nature of a misprint. Melon, which the waiter suggested as an introduction to the meal, cost one fifty ; hors d’œuvres, two francs ; soup, one franc fifty : a rapid calculation showed that four shillings would be gone ere the solid part of the meal began. He glanced around. An officer opposite with golden epaulettes, and above him, on a peg, a cap with scarlet feathers, and a sword, was taking cutlets that wore paper frills out of all proportion to their size.

“ I don’t feel very hungry yet,” said Maxted

confusedly to the waiter. He would have given a great deal to prevent himself from blushing. "I think, if you don't mind, I'll look in again in about an hour's time."

Once outside, he ran as though in danger of his life.

The train strolled into the Gare du Nord at Paris, and Mr. Maxted, arousing himself from retrospection, was taken by the interpreter to the barrier of the platform, and out into the station yard; the portmanteau was placed in a taxicab; the interpreter received half-a-crown for his trouble. At the Hotel Continental, the Londoner washed and changed; took another cab across the bridge and up the rue du Bac. As it stopped at the restaurant where he had endured the painful experience of his youth, he beamed at the thought that no question of expense now obstructed progress, or interfered with comfort. The old recommendation concerning wine and cooking was in evidence; he decided that now, for the first time for a year or so, he would be able to enjoy a meal.

"I'll leave it to you," he said expansively to

the head-waiter. "Give me a good dinner; that's all I ask. Never mind about the expense."

Half an hour later, the head-waiter changed the expression of animated delight that he had worn during the preparations. Having seen two plates go away, he approached with a look of sympathy, and regret.

"I hope you have all you want, sair."

"Yes," replied Mr. Maxted disconsolately. "Everything, thank-you, everything. Excepting an appetite!"

THRIFT, HORATIO

MR. HORACE STIMSON had been requested to act as best man and declined owing to the expense the position would involve, but he made a notable score when the bride and bridegroom left, by producing a paper bag. By some oversight, everybody else had left the task of providing confetti to everybody. Mr. Stimson shared ammunition with Miss Channock, who had sat beside him at the meal. The bridegroom complained that the small discs made his face tingle.

“Where did you buy them, Mr. Stimson?”

“I’ll let you into a secret,” he replied confidentially. “I simply went along to Victoria Station and stood near the barrier where the men nip tickets. When their backs were turned I bent down and scooped up—— See?”

“Don’t let people see you pocketing the nuts.”

“Shall I take a few dates as well? I’ve got to see you home eventually to Camberwell, and

we may as well have something to eat on the road. It'll save the trouble of talking."

The bride's mother made it clear to the company that they would be expected to leave the house by four o'clock, and Mr. Stimson and his companion departed at one minute to the hour; he mentioned that he was never a man to outstay his welcome. In Vauxhall Bridge Road Miss Channock remarked that it was weeks since anybody had taken her to a picture palace; he answered that the ventilation of the buildings left something to be desired, and proposed, instead, a less expensive visit to the Tate Gallery. When they had inspected the paintings, Miss Channock threw out a hint concerning tea. He said too much tea was consumed nowadays, and that to this extravagance he attributed the nervous complaints which existed.

"Making a cheap day of it, aren't you?" she demanded, slightly nettled. "If I'd brought my purse with me——"

"Every night," he explained, "before I go to bye-bye, I make up accounts. If I come across any item that could, with a certain amount of thought, have been avoided, it means I don't sleep

well, and if I don't sleep well, I'm good for nothing at business the following day, and if I'm good for nothing at business, I run a risk of not getting an increase in my salary." He dismissed the subject. "What do you think we two are going to do now?" he inquired.

"Something princely, I'll be bound."

He found himself unable to entertain her suggestion that they should enter the enclosure in Kennington Park and take penny chairs; he declared that walking about would do good to their health, and, as to the programme, nothing was easier than to look over the shoulder of somebody who had purchased one. It happened that the band played two selections from musical comedies greatly favoured by her, and in good humour she chatted about plays she had seen; Mr. Stimson gave an involuntary shiver when she mentioned that on one occasion she went in evening dress; he recovered on being told that orders were obtained. At nine o'clock, when Miss Channock declared she must see about getting home, he was so greatly impressed by her vivacity and good humour that he announced in desperate tones his intention of escorting her by

tram-car. On the way, he argued that the County Council would do well to consider the question of reducing the fares.

If a certain suspicion of economy might be charged against Mr. Stimson in many matters, he was reckless enough where letter-writing was concerned. True, the communications were written on official paper and apparently during business hours, and the printed heading, "Cheapness, Civility, Comfort," seemed an inappropriate opening to a friendly note ; true, the stamps used were perforated with the initials of the firm. But Mr. Stimson had a luxurious method in penning ~~his~~ letters, and they began with " My dear Miss Channock," went on ~~to the~~ stage of " Dearest Miss Channock," and in less than three weeks they started with the word, " Darling," finished with " Always and ever thine, Horace." Miss Channock was touched by the eloquence of these communications, and responded encouragingly. They met by appointment outside the National Gallery and spent a pleasant two hours looking at the pictures and talking about themselves ; they met at South Kensington Museum, where in one of the rooms, when they ought to

have been gazing at the Raphael cartoons, their behaviour caused an attendant to become troubled with a pronounced cough. They went on Sunday mornings to see the changing of the guard at St. James's Palace ; later to church parade in Hyde Park. Miss Channock's birthday occurred on July 16, and Mr. Stimson sent her some verses of original poetry, in the making of which he was hampered by the fact that the lady's Christian name, according to the rhyming dictionary in the free library, lent itself to chancy and fancy, but for the rest found only such words as geomancy, necromancy, termagancy, and others equally useless.

Stimson consulted an experienced colleague, and the information obtained made him seek the assistance of an easy chair in the furnishing department.

"Look here," he said, recovering, "what necessity is there for going away? Honeymoons are only a convention. Why shouldn't we go straight from the registrar's office to the little flat I've got in my eye?"

"You suggest it to the lady," said the other, "and see what you get in the other eye. Her friends and relatives would chaff her about it to

the end of her life. You've got to come into line with the rest of the world. Why, the meanest man I ever knew excepting yourself, he had to take his bride away for ten days to Worthing ; it nearly broke his heart, and he never touched tobacco afterwards. How old is she, by the by ? " Stimson gave a guess. " That's a pity," remarked the colleague. " If she'd been under twelve, you wouldn't have had to take a full ticket for her."

," It isn't a subject for joking," asserted Stimson distressedly. " I've a great mind to put an end to the engagement."

" Is there anything in the letters you've written that you'd object to have read out in court ? "

" If I had to pay damages," he admitted, " it would mean clearing out my savings bank book and starting afresh."

Horace wrote to connections and acquaintances living in the country suggesting they should invite him and his bride to stay for a fortnight ; the replies had a similarity that was painful. A-top of this unfriendly attitude on the part of folk who, by all the rules, ought to have grasped at the opportunity of showing hospitality—" 'Tisn't

as though I was in the habit of getting married"—came rumours that Miss Channock was giving extensive commissions to her dressmaker, and had issued an order to a notable shop near the Elephant and Castle. As she lived in two rooms by herself—there existed on her own statement but one relation, and he resided away in Cornwall—it proved difficult to make inquiries concerning the truth of these perturbing items of news; Miss Channock's landlady was a defensive woman who appeared to cherish resentment against any young man likely to rob her of a good, companionable boarder. There came the question of inviting guests, and this had to be discussed by the two parties to the engagement. Horace Stimson's first idea was that members of his family should be invited because otherwise they would feel under no obligation to send wedding presents; on second consideration he remembered that his connections shared his own thriftiness, and would probably form a syndicate and buy a cruet stand, or something of the kind, to represent the good wishes of all.

"So I think, Nancy dear, if you don't mind, we'll have no wedding breakfast."

"I don't object in the least," she replied, agreeably. "It would only mean silly speeches and remarks that make you feel as though you ought to look confused. And if we go straight off to the seaside, we shall have an appetite for a jolly meal in the evening."

"You mean sandwiches from a ham-and-beef shop?"

"I mean," with a touch of impatience, "something a little more refined and appetising than that."

"'Pon my word," cried Horace Stimson, "from the way you talk I might be marrying into a county 'family!'"

Miss Channock had amongst her acquaintances a girl friend who promised to give services at the registrar's office; Stimson's special colleague consented to furnish help and a signature at the ceremony. Stimson obtained estimates of cheap apartments at the seaside town, but his *fiancée* would not give way on this detail, and insisted upon being allowed to take charge of the task of securing rooms at the hotel she selected. Some compensation arrived to him in the shape of a small wooden box, registered and sealed; inside

a card, "To my dear sweetheart, with all my love," and, carefully set in wool, was a handsome gold watch. His friend and colleague offered the guess that it was not purchased under £10, and Stimson groaned at the thought of so much money being squandered.

"And what are you going to give her, Horace?"

"Is it necessary?" he asked:

"It's usual."

"I don't want to look mean."

"No one," declared his friend, with extravagant earnestness, "could accuse you of being that. If you have a fault it is that you're too open-handed. You're over fond of exercising what I may call unbridled generosity."

Stimson had his silk hat ironed, and, giving in to the persuasion of his friend, purchased a new and cheerful necktie, borrowed a pair of patent leather shoes. Nevertheless, he presented himself at the registrar's office with a countenance that induced the attendant at the Town Hall to assume he had come on another errand, and he was escorted to the clerk who had charge of the work of taking note of departures from life. The ceremony over, and the forms signed, Mrs. Stim-

son accepted the marriage certificate and received congratulations. In another room Horace, with a deep sigh, paid the fees. Outside the Town Hall a taxicab waited, and into this he was forced by the entire strength of the company; they ignored his declared preference for a tram-car. At Victoria, he purchased third-class tickets, and the best man inquired caustically whether he would not rather travel in the dog box. Stimson missed the farewells, because he was busily occupied in making up accounts in a penny memorandum book.

"That," he said resignedly, at East Croydon, "that is the sum total of what we've got rid of already."

"For goodness sake, Horace," she protested warmly, "do put money out of your head for a bit." The other passengers, who had suspected them of being newly married, dismissed the thought. "You make yourself perfectly miserable over it, and if I'm not careful you'll make me the same."

"I sh'd be a lot happier if I could be sure that you really were careful."

"You are happy then?"

"To a certain degree," he admitted.

"Well, then," taking his arm affectionately, "be content with that, and leave off worrying about pounds, shillings, and pence."

He gave way to pressure, and assumed an air of cheerfulness. At the hotel they ordered tea, and later walked on the esplanade, where he, with the assistance of mental arithmetic, reckoned the profits made by the hotel over the transaction. Cost to the hotel, 3*d.* each ; charge to customers, 1*s.* ; balance, 9*d.* Answering a suggestion, he pointed out that the sea could be inspected from the esplanade just as well as from the pier.

"Horace," she cried suddenly, "I've something to tell you that I wanted to keep for later on."

"You've been married before?"

"No ; this is my first experiment, and, because it's the first, I want it to be a success. I can't bear to see you so upset about cash. Perhaps it'll brighten you if I tell you that my one relative down in Cornwall arranged some time ago to make me an allowance of £200 a year so soon as I got married, providing I picked out a man who knew the value of money."

"Duffer! why ever didn't you tell me so?"

“Idiot !” she answered sentimentally, “I wanted to be loved for myself alone.”

The Stimsons get along admirably together. Horace restrains her when she shows an indication of reckless expenditure ; she stops him when he gives signs of his old thriftiness. It is an ideal partnership.

A LOAN AT CHRISTMAS

"I ADMIT I've brought it on myself," said the girl, bunching the slip of paper desperately, "but that doesn't help. I only did it out of brag."

"Let's have another look at the telegram," suggested the others. The weakness of this as a solution of the difficulty increased Miss Goulding's annoyance, and she nudged them away.

"An intelligent lot," she remarked caustically. "Full of ideas. Over-crowded with valuable suggestions. Upon my word," with a burst of exasperation, "I might as well appeal for help to the wax heads in the window. Or to a Christmas toy over the way."

"Tell you what!" cried one suddenly. "Listen! Supposing one of us dressed up."

Miss Goulding glanced at the semi-circle, and gave a cheerless smile. "I make no personal remarks," she said. "The more important

question seems to be, is there one of you prepared to have your hair cut short, for my sake ? ”

“ Certainly not ! ” they answered promptly.

Two lady customers came in, and private anxieties had to be set aside ; they nodded to the assistants, and Miss Goulding stepped forward to take charge. “ Come along,” said the elder lady pleasantly, “ and make me look ten years younger.” Miss Goulding collected the implements of the hair-dressing profession, and guaranteed to do her best.

“ Now, there ”—half an hour later to the other girls—“ there is a woman with sense. I’d no sooner told her what was worrying me than she came out with a first-class notion. Wonder some of you didn’t think of it before.”

“ Why didn’t it occur to you ? ”

“ One of you,” she announced, “ one of you has got to lend me your young man ! ”

They said, at once, this was a likely tale, meaning thereby to intimate that it discovered no favour with them. They were fond of Miss Goulding, and prepared to do anything in reason, but this went over the bounds. Miss Goulding separated them, putting aside those who were

only partially engaged, or not engaged at all ; the safe ones she addressed.

" There's no time to lose," she said rapidly, " and I ask you to remember that I've often done you all a good turn in the past, and it's highly probable I may have a chance of helping you out of a corner in the future, there's three of you, and if you all make a special appeal to your own particular gentleman friend, I feel sure one of them won't mind helping, and the girl whose sweetheart comes to my rooms in Berners Street at nine o'clock to-night, and just sits there, and speaks when he's spoken to, and behaves quietly, why she gets a Christmas present from me the morning after Boxing Day. All you have to do is to explain, and to mention that my name is Bertha. Don't all speak at once." There was no reply from the three.

The head of the firm bustled in. " Miss Goulding," he shouted. " Where's Miss Goulding ? I want Miss Goulding. Oh, there you are. Pack off to that fussy old party at Slough at once. Message just arrived."

" Could one of the others go, sir ? I have a relative coming up from the country this evening to spend Christmas Eve with me."

" Hang your relative ! " cried the head of the firm explosively.

" That would certainly save me a lot of trouble."

" You can get back by a quick train, and you needn't return here." He took out his watch. " Now then, let me see whether you're clever enough to make a start in less than five minutes. She'll be ringing up again, and I want to be able to tell her you are on the way."

Miss Goulding returned from Paddington Station to Berners Street that evening at a quarter past nine, and, albeit fagged after the journey and a harassing time with a trying customer, ran briskly up the stairs to the third floor, where her two small apartments were situated. In the front room, she discovered a severe-featured old lady, bonneted, fully apparelled, and nursing a good-sized package of globular shape ; near the mantelpiece stood a youth, clean-shaven ; he was talking cheerfully as Miss Goulding entered, and broke off to give an " Ah ! " intended to convey relief and recognition.

" I am so sorry, Aunt Grace," she cried, almost

breathless. She explained the reason of the delay. "You've brought me one of your own Christmas puddings. Now that's really kind of you."

"The time ain't seemed long," said the visitor from the country. "We've been talking about this, that, and everything, your young man and me. Haven't you better say 'how do 't to him?'" Miss Goulding crossed to the mantelpiece, and the two shook hands.

"How are you, Bertha dear?" he asked affectionately.

"Come, come," cried the old lady, with a humorous twinkle. "That don't seem like the way engaged couples met in my young day. Ain't there no mistletoe about?" Miss Goulding hesitated for a moment, then offered one side of her face.

"That's good!" said her aunt approvingly. "If you got more kissing, you'd get better looking, my dear. And I've only known him about fifteen minutes, but you'll be glad to know I agree with your taste. Might be a few inches taller, but you can't expect everything. What's he called?"

Miss Goulding glanced appealingly at the youth.

"My name is Charles," he said.

"Not a bad name, neither. I used to know a feller called by that name, and he got killed out in the Ashanti war. He were out there with Sir Garnet Wolseley. As a matter of fact, it's on his account that I never got married, and you've got some black man to thank for me having a bit of money, my dear, and being able to leave it to you, later on. But me not getting a husband don't mean that I want to see you deprived of one. That's why I was so pleased when you said, last time you come down to see me, that you was engaged."

"Can I help you, Bertha?" asked the young man.

"Make yourself 'andy about the 'ouse," said the aunt encouragingly, as he assisted with the table-cloth, "she'll value you a lot more when the time comes for you both to settle down. By the bye, when's that supposed to happen? About what date, I mean?"

"We haven't quite decided yet, aunt."

"I thought," said Charles deferentially, "in about three months time."

"Don't put it off too long," she recommended.

"Down where I live, they go on and on being engaged for ten or twelve year, and by that time they're fairly sick and tired of the sight of each other."

"We've made up our minds——" he began.

"You'll find three glasses," said the girl hurriedly, "in the corner cupboard over there."

"No one else expected?" inquired the aunt.

A ring came, and the aunt, an alert woman, jumped up to answer it, insisting on taking precedence of Charles. "Is Miss Goulding in?" asked a loud voice. "And can I see her, please? Name of Brickwell. She'll understand if you mention that." The newcomer entered with a great air of animation.

"Well, my girl," he said, addressing Miss Goulding, and winking privately at her. "How's the world been using you since last night? Did you manage to get home safely? I had to hold by a strap all the way in the Tube. Brought you some of the chocolates you are so fond of."

"Are you afraid of catching cold?" asked Aunt Grace.

He whipped off his hat. "Is that better?" he demanded. "Hullo!" on seeing Charles.

"Who have we here? Another Richmond in the field? This won't do, this won't do!"

"Please sit down," begged Miss Goulding agitatedly, setting another plate and extra knives and forks. "You've arrived just in time."

"Very funny thing," he declared noisily, "but wherever I go, I nearly always put in an appearance on the very edge of a meal. It's getting to be noticed. It's attracting public attention."

, "Reckon you don't object to that," remarked Aunt Grace.

"I glory in it," he admitted. "Truth of the matter is, I'm a popular chap. I'm welcomed wherever I go. Always received with open arms."

"Nothing like havin' a good conceit of yourself."

"There's no use, ma'am," he said impressively, "no use at all in disguising the truth."

Charles and Miss Goulding were cutting bread in the corner; she whispered to him that she was sorry, but would he please not mind. Charles patted her hand reassuringly; they returned to the table, and Miss Goulding announced that everything was ready.

"I tell you straight," declared Mr. Brickwell, "I'm peckish. Wasn't sure whether food would be provided, and just as I rang it occurred to me that I sh'd have done well to have had a steak first in the grill room at Frascati's. Now that I look at this spread—cold fowl, ham, and lettuce. Lettuce. Let us be thankful." He gazed around disappointedly. "Didn't any one of you see that?" he complained.

"I think we saw it," answered Charles, "but it seemed so small that we decided not to take any notice."

"Make a better one yourself, then. Shall I carve?"

"How'd it be for you to set still," recommended Aunt Grace, "and not kick up quite so much fuss? I like to be quiet at my meals."

"My idea," said Brickwell resentfully, "in coming here was to make myself pleasant to one and all."

"Jest you let us know," she suggested, "when you make a start."

Miss Goulding was slightly hysterical, but Charles, at her side, diverted conversation as she

dismembered the bird, talking of the movement in regard to doing good to the hop trade, a subject on which Aunt Grace and himself appeared to be in complete agreement ; Brickwell interposed once or twice with " Yes, but——," and seemingly his knowledge of the question did not permit him to go further ; he eventually applied energies to the plate set before him. Charles had the view that something more ought to be done for country districts to induce young people to remain there, and not migrate to London, where they so often failed to discover success.

" Fault of our villages is," said Aunt Grace, " that there ent enough folk about. They're too much sprinkled. If a girl wants a sweetheart, she's got to take the first one that offers, otherwise she finds herself left, and a bit later on she gets put away on the top shelf, and then she's forgot. That's why I don't blame a girl like my niece here for coming up to town ; I knowed as well as anything that she'd have plenty of attention here. Told you so, didn't I, my dear, last time you was down to see me ? And your answer was——"

" Is that another knock ? " asked Charles.

They listened. A timid rap at the door came again.

"I'll go," said Miss Goulding resignedly. "There are always a lot of callers just about Christmas."

The new arrival came rapidly into the room, but once there, and faced with other visitors, seemed inclined to turn and run away ; the door was already closed, and he accepted the confused one-sided introductions of the hostess as though bereft of senses. Aunt Grace demanded his name from her niece : a pause ensued, and he broke the silence with the announcement that his friends called him Raddy ; his full title, he mentioned, was Raddisworth. He declined to sit at table, assuring Miss Goulding that he had but recently eaten, and refused to give up his overcoat ; he took a place on the edge of the sofa, and remarked that it was peculiar weather for December. Having said this, he made no further offer towards the fund of general conversation, but gazed steadily at a reproduction of one of Mr. Watts's pictures on the wall, with, apparently, a sincere and earnest endeavour to ascertain its true meaning.

"I know what the farmers want," said Brickwell

noisily. "What they want is common sense."

"That can't be bought," remarked Aunt Grace; "otherwise some of you Londoners would be taking every penny you've got out of the Savings Bank."

"Flatter myself I've got quite enough to go on with. I'm equal to most of the situations that I find myself in. When a certain young lady asked me at half-past seven this evening——"

"Some more ham, Mr. Brickwell?"

"I'm not going to say 'No,'" he mentioned, "to an offer like that. Told you I was a good trencherman, didn't I?"

"We sh'd find a different name for you down at my farm," said Aunt Grace. "Bertha, my dear," to her niece, "I'm looking forrard to hearing you play some of my old favourites."

"I've bought some songs," interrupted Brickwell. "They're in my top-coat."

"Very good place for 'em," declared the old lady. "We'll let 'em stay there out of harm's way. Mr. Charles, are you musical?"

"There's nothing I enjoy more than hearing your niece play," declared the young man.

"And which do you reckon is her best?"

"That," he said diplomatically, "I couldn't possibly say. You see, I like them all, equally well."

Brickwell, perceiving that the old lady was adamant, glanced at his watch on the conclusion of the meal and announced great astonishment on finding the hour so late ; unless he ran off at once he would miss a highly important engagement outside the station at Oxford Circus. Raddisworth, the silent visitor, on this gave up all attempt to understand Watts's picture, and the two went, Miss Goulding accompanying them to the landing, where she thanked them for their help, and obtained from them the names of the lady colleagues responsible for their visits, that she might give suitable acknowledgments later. Returning, she found the other two in close conversation ; her aunt stopped at once, and the girl knew that testimonials were being given. They had music, and Charles said reluctantly that he now must really go.

"I like you," declared the aunt, frankly, in accepting his farewell, "and I hope she'll bring you down to see me early in the Spring."

Miss Goulding said she thought it would be

wise to accompany him downstairs, in case he found any difficulty with the street door. She sighed twice on the way.

"You've been very good," she stammered, "very good indeed. It was easy enough to thank the others, but I don't know how to thank you. Which of the girls sent you?" He gave the information.

"Lucky kid," she said enviously. "Where did you two meet?"

"In a nursery," he replied. "She's my sister. Her young man wouldn't take the job on, and so I offered."

"Is that actually true?"

"As true," he declared, "as the kiss I gave you a little while ago. By the bye——"

"Run along home," recommended Miss Goulding, guarding her lips. "And before I forget it, I hope you'll have a happy New Year."

"That," he said earnestly, "depends entirely upon you."

HER FAULT

MISS CRUTTWELL was engaged on rather important matters when her father's message was delivered. She happened to be a young woman who disliked interruptions, and the task of inducing an elephant, with no acquaintance with methods of the Zoological Gardens, to carry four dolls upon his back, might well have proved difficult to folk of maturer years. Consequently, she replied with some curtness, and nurse had to take resolute action. Miss Cruttwell was conveyed downstairs, struggling and protesting.

"Dadda's just off," said her father, in the hall, adopting the third person manner reckoned appropriate in addressing the extremely young. "Dadda's off to earn some bread and butter for baby. Baby give dadda a nice kiss, and say 'Bye-bye'!" He repeated all this in a more authoritative voice: the young woman kept her face turned away.

"Just a trifle touchy this morning, sir," whispered nurse excusingly. She spoke to her charge. "Be a sweet, good, beautiful pet, darling." The curls shook to indicate a determination to be none of these things. "Blow a kiss then!" The alternative was declined vigorously. The chauffeur, with respect, mentioned that it had gone the half hour. Mr. Cruttwell called a brief farewell to his wife, and strode across to the car.

Wrapped in his heavy coat, he attempted, so soon as they were out of the carriage drive, and in the main road, to give his mind to business. In a general way, he was able to switch on and off at will; his plan was to put away anxieties on reaching home, and hang them up, so to speak, on the hat-stand, where they remained until he set out the following morning. In going through Slough, he caught sight of a toy-shop, and made a mental note to stop there on the way home, and obtain some propitiatory gift for his daughter that would re-establish friendly relations. It seemed strange to leave without a hug from her. Mr. Cruttwell had overheard foremen at the works remark that the arrival of a little one in the family made all the difference to the governor, and he

knew this to be true ; if any proof were wanted, here it was in the fact that the small incident at home made him thoughtful, caused him to become gloomy. Could it be that his wife and all those women-folk of the household were occupied, during his absence, in prejudicing the child against her father ? If so, let them all be precious careful, or there would be trouble and ructions. A father possessed a father's rights, and a father's responsibilities ; and he, Mr. Cruttwell, was not the man to be deprived of them. The car pulled up at the gates of the works ; a commissioner saluted, and stepped forward briskly to take the handle.

" Nice invigorating morning, sir. Slight autumn touch in the air."

" Sergeant," said Mr. Cruttwell, " you may take it that my powers of observation enable me to judge the temperature with some precision. If, at any moment, they should fail, I will ask for your help. Until then—— " Mr. Cruttwell, with an impatient movement of the shoulders, walked along to his office, and the commissioner spoke to the chauffeur of some one who had got the sharp end of the needle, and no mistake.

A Government contract of importance had been given to the firm for the very good reason that no other establishment was able to take it. The firm, naming its figure, had accepted the time limit insisted upon, and Mr. Cruttwell could discover no fault in the manner of the staff in dealing with the urgent and considerable task. The workmen agreed to extra hours; took their overtime pay on Friday nights without a murmur. Bonuses were promised to the higher officials, who made no protest. Travellers found themselves instructed to give a certain elasticity to petty disbursements, and expressed willingness to comply. From the sheds, as Mr. Cruttwell looked around, came the clatter and movement that suggested industry.

"If she had been left alone," he remarked, still upon his grievance, "the little person would have hugged me right enough, and—— Hi! What are you doing there?"

"Pardon, sir," said the lad, "but I'm running a errand for Mr. Jackson."

"Did Mr. Jackson tell you to go across the grass? Do you know the trouble and bother we've had to get that triangular piece of turf to

grow? Couldn't you just as well have gone around on the asphalt? "

" I was told to run like hell."

" Oh," remarked Mr. Cruttwell bitterly, " so that's the way you answer the head of the firm." He gave an exaggerated imitation of the lad's reply. " As you are so good at hurrying, perhaps you will do something in that direction to oblige me."

" Certainly, sir."

" Go to the cashier's department, and ask him to pay you up to this evening."

" Does that mean I've got the sack? "

" You have," replied Mr. Cruttwell, " with great intelligence, guessed correctly."

The cashier, telephoning through, later, said that young Overton had come for his wages, and was the message correct? Mr. Cruttwell retorted sharply. The cashier, apologizing, inquired whether Mr. Cruttwell remembered that Overton's father, not long since, met with an accident in the works, and that there were seven in the family; the cashier was informed that the number of brothers and sisters possessed by Overton gave no sort of interest to Mr. Cruttwell. Mr. Crutt

well, ringing off, went on with the task of dictating answers to correspondence, and the three girl typists found that the tone of these became less brusque. The managing director was nearly himself again, and when his presence was demanded at the other telephone, with the information that the War Office wished to speak, he conducted his side of the discussion with amiability.

"Quite understand your feelings, Sir Charles, and I assure you there is no necessity to be anxious. We shall be ready to deliver at the time appointed; rather before that if anything. Any hitch likely? Dear no! Dear me, no! No hitch likely, and no hitch possible. Yes, of course, I recognize how important the matter is. What's that? I didn't quite catch—Europe watching, you say. Oh, Europe can watch as much as it likes. It's our patent, and we are not going to let any other country but our own have the advantage—Yes, this day week. Yes, I know the time is getting near. Yes! Oh, yes! I see! Well, I mustn't detain you. Wife and baby? Oh, in capital health, thank you, Sir Charles. Kind of you to remember them. She's nearly two and a half now. Time flies, as you

say. Good-bye !” Mr. Cruttwell, gratified by the personal inquiries, hummed cheerfully as he turned away from the telephone. Through the window, he could see men going off to the canteen for mid-day dinner ; they represented one-half of the staff ; the rest would go in an hour’s time. His colleagues always agreed with him that if the men were treated with consideration, they repaid, in full, by loyalty and industrious behaviour. In his own room, a chop, well and correctly done, and a bottle of dry ginger ale reminded him that the managing director was not left out of the thoughtful scheme of good feeding.

“Triumph of organization,” he remarked contentedly to the cruet-stand. “Everything so well oiled.”

At half-past one, and before throwing away the end of his cigar, he went across the room in polka time to give himself the pleasure of seeing the return : it was rather interesting to compare features of those who had taken food, with features of men going to the meal. Five minutes went, and he touched the electric bell : gave an order to a clerk. It seemed incredible that his

watch should be fast. He preferred to think that the superintendent of the canteen had made a blunder that would require to be explained.

"Excuse me, sir," said the clerk, returning, "but there appears to be trouble of some kind. The second lot has gone along, but, the first detachment has not returned."

"But this is perfectly absurd!"

"Quite so, sir."

"Why don't you ascertain the cause at once?"

"I have, sir," replied the clerk. "The men are holding a meeting. Some rather excited speeches are being made. The idea seems to be to select five to make up a deputation and interview you."

"I'll interview them," said Mr. Cruttwell determinedly.

"There's a sort of a grievance, sir, but I couldn't find out the exact nature of it."

"We must be firm," said Mr. Cruttwell, pulling at his waistcoat. "Firm, and, at the same time, fair. Workmen have a right, nowadays, to be treated as human beings, and we must remember it is impossible to do without them. If they have a complaint to make against any of the foremen,

I shall not hesitate to tell the superior man to apologize, and set the matter straight. Personal dignity cannot be allowed to stop the wheels of a concern like this."

"Of course not, sir," agreed the clerk.

"Send all the foremen here to me."

The députation was seen approaching the offices. Two of the five kept to the asphalted path, the other three walked across the grass. One of the three asked, at the entrance, in an elaborate way whether J. H. Cruttwell, Esq., was within : if so, could he spare a few minutes.

"Pray take seats," said the managing director, cheerfully. "Very glad to have a call from such old and valued friends as those I see before me. It is a proof, I think, of the mutual respect and—ah—trustfulness that we have for each other. You remember perhaps what I said, to this effect, at the last annual dinner, and I am not prepared to withdraw a single word of the speech I delivered on that occasion." The foremen of the various sheds were ushered into the room; they took up positions near the typists' table. The young women were being detained outside until the conference had come to an end. "Jack-

son, you have the air of being at the head of the visitors. Stand up now, and state your argument as frankly, and, if I may offer the suggestion, as briefly as you can."

"Mr. Cruttwell, sir," said Jackson, turning his tweed cap inside out, and inspecting the lining with some curiosity, "I sent that boy Overtop on a errand. You caught him in the act of running across the grass. You sacked him. His mother has been very hard done by of late, and this, on the top of everything else will just about finish her."

"Did the lad tell you he was impertinent to me?"

"He did not," replied Jackson, "and if he had, I shouldn't have believed him. What was the exact words he used, sir?" Mr. Cruttwell gave the information. "He didn't repeat my words correctly," said Jackson. "What I told him was that if he didn't run in the way mentioned, I'd break every bone in his blooming body, and roast his scorching soul afterwards."

"That is not the sort of language I like to hear."

"You wasn't meant to hear it, sir. Besides

which, it's the 'only way to talk to lads, if you want them to carry out orders. If I'd said 'Overton, my dear lad, will you 'ave the great kindness to be so good as to oblige by doing me the favour of going along——' and so forth, why he would simply have smiled all over his face. Be that 'as it may, our intention in coming to see you, sir, is, to request you to take him back."

"I can't do that."

"You can do it, sir. What you mean, perhaps, is that you won't."

"That's it. I won't!"

One of the members of the deputation whispered. "I am reminded," said Jackson, "by a fellow-worker that I forgot to mention that the boy's mother is expecting her eighth."

"If you had mentioned it, the circumstance would not have affected my decision."

"That's final, is it?"

"Absolutely final!"

"Very well, then." Jackson glanced at his companions, and they nodded. "If a lad is to be treated in this fashion for a mere trifle, why there's none of us safe. My instructions are to

tell you that the whole of the chaps will knock off work forthwith."

"Good-day to you!" snapped Mr. Cruttwell.

The foremen were falling in at the rear of the short procession: he ordered them to remain.

"Now!" he said. "Here we are at a crisis in the history of the firm, one that has come at a highly inconvenient moment, but has, nevertheless, to be faced. Until I can communicate with my fellow-directors, I look to you to stand by, and help me in every way that is possible. First of all, can I rely upon you?"

"No, sir," answered one of the foremen promptly, "you can't. We've been talking it over, and we've come, rightly or wrongly, to the conclusion that you've acted in a very high-handed manner, and seeing that the affair is taken so much to heart, your best plan will be to——"

"You want me to cave in?"

"If you prefer that way of putting it, sir."

"You can all go," said Mr. Cruttwell.

At question time that afternoon, in the House of Commons, a member on the Opposition side

rose, and begged to put to the Secretary of State for War, question number twenty-three on the paper. The right honourable gentleman, reading his answer, said that the matter was one of some delicacy, and he was sure the House would pardon him if he replied with caution. All he felt prepared to say at the moment was that the country might rest assured that the Government was fully alive to the situation, and that within the course of a very few days it would be possible to announce that the last arrangements had been completed, and we could then feel ourselves in advance of any Continental nation in this particular respect. (Cheers.) The member rose again and said that, arising out of that answer, he would like to ask whether the work was being carried out in the Government dockyards, or by a private firm. The Secretary of State for War thought there would be no harm in giving the information that it was being done by a private firm, one in which he had perfect confidence. A Labour member inquired whether it was a fact that the entire staff of the firm in question had that day ceased work. (Oh! oh! and cries of "Don't answer.") The Secretary of State for

War felt certain the hon. gentleman had, not for the first time, been mis-informed. (Cheers and laughter.) Perhaps he might add, in all seriousness, that at a critical time like the present, hon. members should abstain from repeating every absurd rumour that happened to come to their ears. (Loud cheering.)

At half-past five, an Ambassador, who was being specially watched by reporters, paid a visit to Downing Street, and caught the Under-Secretary for the Foreign Office on the point of leaving for Belgrave Square. The two went in, and the newspaper men in waiting observed that the Under-Secretary's Chief drove up, half an hour later, with an expression on his features that they resolved to describe as grave, thoughtful and serious. Extra editions came out that night with the striking words "Is War Imminent?" In the morning, snap-shots appeared wherein, by the vagaries of the camera, the Ambassador was depicted as one making hideous grimaces that suggested contempt for the nation, and for all English-speaking people. Rehearsals were called at music-halls for eleven o'clock in order to run over new songs of a patriotic and defiant nature,

and an Inspector of Police and several constables, outside the Ambassador's house, kept a turbulent crowd on the move. Ministerial journals urged the country to trust those responsible for the direction of affairs ; Opposition newspapers said that, in spite of the disadvantages of swopping horses when crossing a stream, the War Minister ought undoubtedly to go. A hurriedly summoned eleven o'clock meeting at Cannon Street Hotel was attended by City men in large numbers ; in the large Hall, and also in the station yard, resolutions were passed with enthusiasm, calling upon the Government to take definite action. At a studio in Chelsea, six men and two ladies and King Charles' spaniel met and agreed unanimously to give all their efforts to the side of peace.

Meanwhile, the Cruttwell baby shared, to some extent, the consequences of her thoughtless action. Insisting at breakfast on the presence of Dadda, she was informed her parent had not been home during the night ; nurse hastened to add that this constituted no reflection upon Dadda's behaviour. The bad, naughty, naughty men at the works were giving trouble, and it

was Dadda's task to put it right. The baby commanded that the people in fault should be punished without delay, and Nanna going outside the door, slapped the bannisters several times ; the Cruttwell baby expressed approval at this prompt serving out of justice. Baby's mother, also taking action, ordered the motor-car to be prepared, and, rather red of eyes, and decidedly anxious of countenance, went off to the works.

" John ! " she cried, entering the room of the managing director. " Where are the others ? Why haven't you sent for them to come, and take some of the responsibility ? You poor soul, you haven't had a wink of sleep either."

" I have had no desire for sleep, my dear," he replied, " and I sent for my colleagues, and find they are absent from home. I hope that answers all your questions." She demanded other particulars.

" Have you cancelled the dismissal of the boy Overton ? "

" No," he answered doggedly, " and I have not the slightest intention of doing so. Labour must be taught a lesson. Labour has to understand

that discipline is a thing to be maintained at all costs."

"Let somebody else do all that. You needn't take the job on. Look at all that has happened as a result of your——"

"I have not read the journals," said Mr. Cruttwell doggedly, "and I do not intend to do so. My way is clear. I have put my hand to the plough and—— Besides, there's the question of dignity."

"Which of these telephones communicates with the offices?" He pointed to one; mentioned that the other had been disconnected, by his orders, to escape interruptions. Mrs. Cruttwell, speaking, requested the head-cashier to come at once to Mr. Cruttwell's room; she directed one of the lady typists to pin on hat, and rush to find Jackson.

"My dear," said Mr. Cruttwell, with a tired attempt at determination, "I can allow no one, not even you, to dislocate the machinery that I have set to work. My plans are fixed and settled, and I am going to see them through to the bitter end." She requested one of the other lady clerks to bring a cup and saucer. "At home, at Gerrard's

Cross, I leave everything to you; here it is I who am in charge. Understand that, please!"

Mrs. Cruttwell, producing a Thermos flask, poured out hot coffee and milk. Her husband, obeying orders with the reluctance of one who feels he may be creating a dangerous precedent, drank it, and in less than two minutes was fast asleep. Now, coffee in a general way is supposed to keep people awake; one can only assume this must have been a special blend, prepared for a special purpose, by Mrs. Cruttwell. Just before he went off, her husband, in a drowsy manner, inquired after baby.

The cashier, privately consulted, seemed doubtful until Mrs. Cruttwell spoke of an increase of £25 a year. A minute later, Jackson was shown in. A screen had been placed around the chair where Mr. Cruttwell slept.

"Mr. Jackson, an unfortunate misunderstanding appears to have arisen."

"No misunderstanding on our side, lady," remarked Jackson.

"My husband is resting," went on Mrs. Cruttwell, "and he has left it to me to explain. His remarks to the lad were in the nature of a joke,

that young Overton seems to have taken seriously."

"But what about him being paid off? Him, with his father in the hospital, and his poor mother——"

Mrs. Cruttwell gave a sign to the cashier, and that gentleman stepped forward. To her question, Jackson admitted that he had never attempted to speak or to listen at a telephone: Jackson expressed a hope that Heaven would continue to guard him from the necessity of making such a delicate experiment. The cashier thereupon said that telephones were uncommonly tricky things, with one word sounding very much like another, and at times sounding like nothing at all. The governor, it appeared, made some inquiry concerning an address in Hampshire, and the message had been taken to refer to Overton the lad, instead of Overton the village. The cashier wished to accept entire responsibility.

"Why didn't he say so when the deputation called?"

"A commendable desire," said the cashier, "on the part of the governor to stand up for me, and take the blame himself."

Jackson considered the matter. Mrs. Cruttwell begged him to waste no time, because she was on her way to Mrs. Overton's house, and deliver there bottles of port to be used as a medicine.

"If the rest see it in this new light," announced Jackson, "they'll be back at work, every one of 'em, before the bell goes for dinner!"

When the other directors, giving respite to grouse, arrived by the Great Northern express from Scotland, they assured Mr. Cruttwell he had conducted a difficult business in a tactful manner, and hoped it would be a lesson to him. The House of Commons that afternoon was informed that the slight trouble at the works had been satisfactorily arranged. The Ambassador was recalled, and publicly censured for exceeding his instructions; later he found himself honoured with the title of Count.

The grass plot in front of the works has been converted into a garden, and the baby girl at Gerrard's Cross takes great care to kiss her father every morning, before he steps into the car.

THE TRIUMPH OF YOUNG CAYLEY

I HAVE a suspicion this is a story that ought not to be written. I fear it may have a discouraging effect on energetic young men who happen to read it. Likely enough, Cayley himself does not wish to be reminded of the indiscretions of twenty-four. All the same, it has to be told.

Ernest Cayley was getting on well in a West End firm ; that is to say, he received £150 a year, with a small bonus in December, and payment for overtime. One of the few luxuries he permitted himself was that of occupying the position of Cabinet Minister in the local Parliament ; this meant an initial expenditure of 5s. for the session, and one had to keep up a certain amount of style—flower in the buttonhole on Thursday evenings, patent leather boots. Mr. Chamberlain returned from his trip to South Africa in March of that year, and Ernest Cayley, after a debate on this topic, was looking forward hopefully to the end

of the session ; he had been badgered to such an extent by one or two members of the Opposition that, keeping a brave face to the world, he was privately considering whether it would be worth his while to take office again. Perhaps a dramatic resignation, now and at once.

" Beg to give notice," said a member, rising with scarlet countenance on the other side, " that at the next meeting of this House I shall move a vote of censure on the Secretary of State for the Colonies." Some commotion ensued, and a Conservative who always cried " Question ! " when anything was said with which he did not agree, shouted the word three times for luck. Ernest pencilled a note on the sheet of paper in front of him, placed a hand in front of his mouth to pretend he was hiding a yawn.

" Will you make a point of preparing a bit," requested the Prime Minister, when the Speaker left the chair, " for next Thursday ? I happen to know the other side's issuing a lot of tickets for the Strangers' Gallery."

Ernest Cayley snapped the elastic band around his papers. " I think," he replied, " that I will leave it to the spur of the moment."

"Just as you like. Only don't let the spur of the moment turn us out now that we have managed to hang on so long."

Ernest, with a week to arrange his defence, read leading articles in newspapers that supported his policy, studied those which did not agree with him. Walking in St. James's Park at lunch-time, and across Wandsworth Common of an evening, he imagined every possible lunge the enemy might make, selected the best guard, practised the neatest *riposte*. At the corner of Melody Road he one night encountered Harwood, the man responsible for the threatened motion; both were gesticulating with arms, lips moved silently. They frowned at each other, and remarked gloomily in passing on that it was a fine night.

"By the by," said Harwood, running back, "happen to be using your two tickets for the gallery next Thursday?"

"I am not using them."

"There's a political gentleman, an acquaintance of mine, and his daughter." Harwood blushed. "I'd like to ask them to come, but I've given mine away."

"Here they are," said Ernest Cayley, producing

his pocket-book. "Pray make any use of them that you think fit."

It may have been that the courtesy shown by Ernest modified the deportment of Harwood on the evening of the debate ; possibly the presence of a young woman in furs, seated with her father in the front row of the gallery, encouraged good manners at the expense of effectiveness. The Secretary of State for the Colonies exchanged whispers with the Foreign Minister, who said, "Well, old man, he hasn't exactly wiped the floor with you." The resolution having been seconded briefly, Ernest Cayley rose. Addressing the Speaker, he remarked that he had no complaint to make in regard to the matter or the manner of the honourable member's speech ; they did honour, if he might say so, to the House in which he delivered them, the country that gave him birth. (Cheers, and the cry of "Question.") But when he came to consider what the honourable member did not say, and did not say because he dared not say, then he was bound to confess the time for compliments was past. Ernest held the lapel of his coat with one hand ; the other arm was extended. "Sir, enough of the

cautious phrase, the hesitating word. I am about to speak plainly. I am going to speak to the point."

Harwood, at the close of the evening—evidently acting under instructions—presented Ernest to the girl in furs and to Mr. Scott, her father. Ernest wished to talk to the girl and to receive her compliments, but Mr. Scott would not permit this. The father declared he had not enjoyed anything so much for a long, long time. Had Mr. Cayley heard of the H.M.G. movement, and what did he think of the scoundrelly business? Ernest replied that he was not fully acquainted with the intentions of the supporters, but he had no doubt they deserved, and would encounter, severe opposition.

"Look here," said the other, "I'm like yourself—frank, outspoken, straightforward. We have just started an anti-H.M.G. Society. Will you leave Great George Street, take the job of secretary, and work like a nigger for the cause?"

"How much a year, sir?"

"Three-fifty, and all travelling expenses paid." Ernest Cayley gasped. "Don't decide right off.

Come back to Porchester Square and have some supper, and talk it over."

"Our carriage is waiting," said Miss Scott pleasantly. "Mr. Harwood, we'll say good-night to you."

To follow up the work of the society as engineered by Ernest would have necessitated going through the columns of London and provincial journals, only that I have been privileged to inspect correspondence addressed in the early days to Mrs. Cayley—mother of Ernest—and, later, to some one else. One of the first is from Reading. "A fairly good meeting," he writes, "held in the town hall, but unfortunately there was little opposition, the H.M.G.'s apparently thinking discretion the better course of valour. Lord Hinkham spoke to me afterwards and said my platform style reminded him of that of a well-known public man; he could not recall the name. Only one reporter present, and he was drawing girls' faces most of the time." A letter, from Oxford is in a brighter tone. "All the best men from the various colleges were present, and I spoke with great fervour. At the close a branch was formed. Clearly the H.M.G.'s stand

no chance where higher education prevails. I appear to have made a slight error in venturing upon a classical allusion. I was not aware before that Hades had two syllables, and I did not wish to use before a cultivated assembly the other word."

In regard to the H.M.G.'s, I am told that this furious, sweeping attack conducted by Cayley stunned the authorities, demoralized the secretary. They had taken comfortably appointed offices in Vauxhall Bridge Road for a term of five years, twelve months only of which had gone, and it was their intention to carry on a decorous campaign with just sufficient spirit to please the subscribers. You can guess at the annoyance when news came in of Cayley's rushing methods. Members wrote to inquire what was being done to meet the storm ; the secretary felt it advisable to bring the matter before the May meeting of the committee. The committee included one gentleman of leisure who had often been invited to speak in public on various subjects but never so often as he wished ; his proposal was that he and the secretary should be empowered to arrange during the summer recess for as many

meetings on behalf of the H.M.G. as seemed necessary in order to counteract the work of the opposition society. The committee, glad of the chance of passing on the responsibility, agreed. A lady who had hitherto sent an annual subscription of half-a-crown promised to make it five shillings. "And I hope," she said, "that all those whose names stand at the top of the list with their hundreds and their fifties will follow my good example."

It was at this period that Ernest Cayley began to address his informal reports to another lady. I think she must have written congratulating him on the success of his efforts.

"Dear Miss Scott," he writes. "Caught the express from Paddington this morning, after morning's work at central agency, and arrived (Exeter) in good time for meeting. To my surprise, found H.M.G.'s were starting their campaign here, and had chosen same date. I at once wrote civil letter to secretary inviting him to come to my platform after his meeting, or offering to come to him when I had closed mine. He replied to the effect that in view of language I had used concerning his society he could



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not trust himself to face me in debate ; feared he might be carried away by feelings of indignation. We had excellent meeting, and ascertaining that large hall taken by the others was but one-quarter filled I suggested to chairman that he should abstain from making any remarks, but request entire audience to go on there with us. The H.M.G.'s were greatly surprised to see us trooping in. I asked some questions, and was invited to go up on the platform. I said offer came too late. We sang verses which you composed, and retired. Later their secretary came to see me at hotel, and said he wished to speak to me as man to man. Said we were cutting each other's throats, and I replied with some humour that his early demise was my constant wish and prayer. To appeal from him that we should both, in own personal interests slacken pace I answered with indignation.

"Thank you very much for the bunch of violets. They smell quite pleasant."

The next letter, dated a fortnight afterwards, is from the London office—

"MY DEAREST EVELYN,—The H.M.G.'s have relinquished their tour, and there is reason to believe that the members of Parliament who at first espoused their cause are withdrawing support. Their secretary—a friendly chap, but apparently entirely without principle—told me the other day at Rugby Junction that the subscriptions now coming in were about sufficient to keep the office cat. I think the time has come when we can reduce the number of public meetings, the more so that my voice has temporarily disappeared, but other efforts will be sustained. I hope you saw my letter, signed 'A Mother of Six,' in yesterday's *Telegraph*, and one, also from my pen, in to-day's *Post*, signed 'A Roman Citizen.' It is good to hear that your father regards my poor endeavours with approval; it is better still to know that they have aroused in you the instinct of affection. Your proposal that we should fly to foreign climes is an admirable one, but it has the defect that, if carried out, I should be unable to direct the work of our society. Perhaps Streatham would do as well. Think this over, and, in course of a week or two, let me know."

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The last note in the series begins "Darling," and is penned with obvious haste :—

"News of testimonial has come as enormous surprise to me. Shall be at your father's house promptly at eight o'clock to-night. Can we see each other for a few brief, precious moments ? "

The newspaper cutting is dated the next day :—

"At 115, Porchester Square, W., last night a pleasing ceremonial was gone through in connection with the work of the Anti-H.M.G. Society. Mr. Jasper Scott, F.S.A., in taking the chair, announced that the movement which they some months ago set out to oppose had been routed and extinguished, and it was no longer necessary for their society to exist. The success had been due entirely to the almost superhuman energies shown by the secretary, Mr. Ernest Cayley. (Cheers.) He had pleasure in presenting him with an album containing snapshots of the members of the committee, and he trusted Mr. Cayley would now enjoy the retirement to which he was entitled. Mr. Cayley acknowledged the gift with great emotion."

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Ernest called at Great George Street three months subsequently, and after a wait of an hour and a quarter was permitted to state his case.

"I could have told you what a mistake you were making," said his old employer, "if you had cared to ask me. You exceeded the legal limit. You ran past the signals. You arrived at the pierhead before any one expected you. You were never meant to be a politician; you ought to have been a race-horse. Not married, you say?"

"Nor likely to be, sir."

"You can come back here at your former salary," said the other. "I dare say you've had your lesson."

ANCIENT AND MODERN

"**N**AUGHTY girl!" remarked the tall mother, looking down at the child with the frown of a disappointed art critic. "Can't think how in the world you came to be a daughter of mine." The child sighed penitently. "What's that you say?"

"Didn't say anything, mamma."

"Then why didn't you? What's the use of my standing here talking for your good, if you take no notice? Do you think I've nothing better to do than to stay and argue with you?"

A retort seemed to be creeping near to the thoughts of the small girl, but she sent it back.

"Once more," said her mother, with deliberation, "and only once more I'm going to ask you the question, and if you can give me a civil and respectful answer, I shall feel extremely obliged. Of course, I know I've no right to ask it." This with a tremor of the head denoting sarcasm.

"I'm nobody in this house. My own child is allowed to ride rough-shod over me. I wish to ask, and I promise you I shan't ask you again: if you won't tell me you must put up with the consequences—have you or have you not said your prayers?"

"Yes, mamma, thank you."

"Then say them again and say them distinctly, so that I can hear you. Do you hear? Don't mumble your words like a—like a humming bird," she concluded lamely.

The child, kneeling on the cold floor, went through the appeals; the while her mother untied some of the curl-papers that appeared to have loosened slightly, re-twisting them until the girl offered a gasp of protest. "Pity my simplicity, suffer me to come to Thee, Amen!"

"He never will," prophesied the mother, taking upon herself the task of giving an immediate reply to the prayers. "He'd never be bothered with a wicked, disobedient child like you. It's a very different place that you'll go to, Sarah, my girl, and some day you'll recognize that your poor mother you despise so much was right. Repeat those verses I taught you. Re-

peat them now before you get into bed again."

The girl complied.

"Fairly good!" decided the mother, with candid regret at being forced to give commendation. "I've heard you say them better. Now the ninth of Revelation," snuffing the candle which she held, "and then you can get back into bed. Begin at 'And he opened.'"

"'And he opened,'" recited the child, again fixing her gaze on the wall-paper for more complete concentration of mind, "'he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of—as the smoke of——'"

"'A great——'"

"'Smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke—roses——'"

"Think what you're saying, miss."

"'There came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth, and unto them was given power as the scorpions of the earth have power.'"

"That will do," announced the mother graciously. "What is a scorpion?"

"A scorpion is an animal that—an animal

which——” Tears intervened. “An animal that scorps.”

“Get to bed, do!” cried her parent, with a new vehemence. The child obeyed, and the mother setting the brass candle-stick on the table tucked her in, giving a sharp kiss on the forehead where the hair was strained back.

“If ever you grow up,” finally, “and if ever you should be able to afford to buy children of your own, I hope, Sarah, you’ll remember how kind your own mother was to you!”

“Mamma, dear! what is a scorpion really?”

“I had intended leaving the candle for a few minutes,” declared the mother, “until you’d gone off to sleep. But as a reward for asking that silly question, I shall simply leave you, Sarah, completely in the dark!”

This was not an unprecedented event, and the child turned her head on the pillow with a steady determination not to care whether she went to sleep immediately, or whether she stayed awake for some hours. The faint light which came through the blinds gave a shadow of moving branches of a tree in the garden, and this, at first, seemed like company; company agreeing cordi-

ally with every argument until the wind outside rose, and then the shadows became ill-tempered, losing all control and engaging in a hand-to-hand fight.

"They're scorpings each other!" said the little girl, alarmed.

Here was only the beginning of an eventful hour. Crawling things came out of the roses on the wall, and they too began to struggle, clutching each other fiercely. When one locust had defeated and eaten a considerable number of opponents and, in consequence, became swelled to a perfectly unreasonable size, he slid down the wall-paper and sat on the edge of her pillow, breathing stertorously and chuckling at intervals.

"I know what I shall do," said the bloated locust, "when I've had a bit of a smoke and a rest. I shall look out for some youngster, and I shall eat her. That's what I shall do, and I shan't make any bones about it either!"

She kept very quiet in the fearful hope that the enormous insect might doze off and forget all about her. But now smoke filled the room, and through it, one could see a furnace blazing steadily with the iron door open. Flames came out,

fierce flames that made a spurt across at her face, and, unable to refrain any longer from expressing the thoughts of her terrified mind—

“ Whatever on earth is the matter, now ? ” demanded the mother testily, appearing in a white gown, and carrying the brass candlestick. “ I really believe you frighten yourself on purpose for no reason at all ! ”

* . * ' * * *

You will have guessed that all this happened nearly thirty years ago, and when you have crossed the space of time indicated and landed into the present year, I want to introduce you again to Sarah, who has made progress more leisurely. So leisurely, indeed, that we were all on the point of labelling her as spinster when the news came that she had made an excellent marriage ; a lady contemporary on accepting the information remarked, with a good amount of acidity, that it ~~made~~ one feel there was a chance for everybody. On more news arriving a year later, the same woman said, giving a short laugh—

“ Wonder what kind of a mother she'll make ? ”

You and I can easily see.

Sarah, at the head of the table, in the temporary

absence of her husband at a City Company dinner, selects critically from the contents of a plate before her, and says to the maid—

“ Kindly pass this to Master Edgar.”

“ Give me some scrump,” orders that young gentleman.

“ No, dear,” replies Sarah, with decision, “ no. The well done contains less nourishment for a little boy. Eat what is given you, and be thankful.”

“ Give me some scrump, or I don’t touch a single bit of it.”

“ Haven’t you any appetite, dearie ? ”

The small boy, declining to waste words, points at the particular quarter of the joint that has engaged his young affections.

“ Don’t imagine for a moment,” says Sarah, shaking her head reprovably, “ that you are going to have your own way. When I was a little girl, I was never allowed to argue with my parents.”

“ I’m not arguing.”

“ But you are, my sweet.”

“ I’m not. It’s you ! ”

“ Well, well,” remarks Sarah cheerfully, “ now

that we've settled that point, let us both set to and eat our dinner, shall we? Let's see who finishes first."

"You can do as you like," answers the little boy. "I'm going to have some well done, or I'm going to have nothing at all."

Sarah gazes at him earnestly in the hope of detecting signs of wavering; failing to discover these, she gives a sigh.

"Mary, bring back Master Edgar's plate."

"Lot of fuss," comments the young gentleman, "about nothing at all."

The meal goes on more cheerfully after this, and the boy gives his mother expert opinion on the team sent out to Australia. Sarah listens approvingly, checking here and there a tendency to use what she calls slang, and calling the maid to give evidence in support of her assertion; the maid, like many witnesses in more important cases, shows an excess of enthusiasm, and her mistress reproves her, reminding Mary that boys will be boys, and that it is useless to expect they should be angels. The youth, observing his favourite dish is not amongst the sweets, becomes less vivacious, and says plainly that this is a

rotten household, bewailing his own rotten luck in being a member.

"Twenty minutes' reading," announces Sarah genially, "and then off he goes to bye-bye!"

"I'm going to stay up to see father."

"Look here, Edgar," says his mother deliberately. "Attend to me and don't play with the salted almonds. It is now twenty minutes to nine; at ten minutes past, you go straight upstairs. Why, do you know that when I was your age, I had to go to bed at seven o'clock, summer and winter!"

"Nice sort of mother you must have had."

"She was a dear, affectionate soul."

"That's where you had the pull over me. Shall we have a fight? You pretend to be a burglar breaking into the house and I'll be father and tackle you. Come on; don't waste time."

"If I do this," bargains Sarah, "you'll promise to go to bed, dear, the moment the clock shows half-past nine."

"Out you go!" orders the child.

Sarah, returning in one of her husband's overcoats and one of his tweed caps, remarks aloud, in the character of the part, that this seems a

decent sort of crib, and that a good haul may be expected. Goes around by the windows, and finding the boy remains silent hopes he has gone to sleep and herself keeps quiet. To tell the truth she is rather nervous, for these games become more unequal every day, and in mimic tussles she cannot manage her boy as in earlier times. Coming along furtively in the direction of the table, she gives a sudden scream.

"At last," growls a deep voice, "at last, Jim Latham, I have nabbed you. Are you going to the police station quietly or are you going to make a fuss?"

"Edgar, dear, you're hurting your mother. Do please be more careful. You're too rough."

The lights are turned on by the indignant boy.

"Most extraordinary," he complains, "but somehow or other, you never can keep anything going for long. We might have had quite a decent game if you had only gone on pretending."

"Shall we play at me hiding things, and you trying to find them?"

"Kids' sport!"

"Well," says Sarah despairingly, "you suggest

something, dear. Only don't let us lose sight of the clock! Father will be so cross if he comes home and finds you are still up."

The child adroitly suggests a diversion that seems likely to occupy a considerable portion of time; in the course of it, Sarah has to assume variously the characters of Lady Jane Grey at the Tower, Charles the First in Whitehall, Uncle Tom, the Sheriff of Nottinghamshire, and an unpopular lad named Morell at the preparatory school for Young Ladies and Gentlemen in Ladbrooke Grove. They have not come to the end when a key turns in the front door, and the boy's father closes it after him quietly, as one fearful of arousing the household.

"I say!" entering the room. "Really, Sarah, really. I don't want to be annoyed with you, but that boy of ours ought to have been in bed long ago."

"Brought me anything?" demands the youngster.

"My lad," turning to his offspring, "in point of fact, I've brought a box of sweets for you. Each guest was presented with one before leaving. But as punishment for staying up like this, when

you are aware that I want you to go to bed early, you won't have them until the morning."

"Good-night, mother."

"Good-night, my dear. But I'm coming up with you. Say good-night to your father."

"Not unless he gives me those sweets."

The father hesitates. "Do you think they'll do him any harm, Sarah?"

Sarah, returning twenty minutes later, mentions she has read him to sleep and hopes he will have pleasant dreams. The father says children must be allowed to be happy when they are young, lest the chance should never come again.

"We were all little people once," he adds generously, "and I expect our parents did their level best to spoil us if the truth were known."

"Daresay that is so," agrees Sarah. "I was telling the dear boy only just now what a good, indulgent mother mine was!"

A SWISS RÔLE

WE had no acquaintances at the hotel, but Mander's sweetheart and her young brother were coming out to stay for a fortnight. Mander had met her at an amateur theatrical club to which they both belonged, and he was very much gone on the lady—up to the eyebrows in fact. He said she had the sense of humour highly developed and described her as very sporting; always ready to share a joke. It was on the fourth morning that Mander knocked at my door and made an announcement.

"What's that?" I shouted.

"Most awfully sorry," he said, "but it's thawing."

"What a confounded muddle you are making of this trip to be sure," I called back irritably. "You induce us to take our holiday from the City in January instead of August, you persuade us to come out here with the idea of enjoying Alpine sports, and now——"

"We shall have to make the best of it, old chap. After all, it isn't my fault."

"Whose fault is it then?" Manders appeared unable to give an answer off-hand.

I dressed and went downstairs, and in the hall gazed out at the sloppy ground that the previous night had been covered with thick, white, sensible snow. The rest of the people were looking depressed, with the exception of a short man in spectacles.

"Change in the weather," he remarked.

"The fact has not escaped my notice," I said in a bitter way. "You don't seem to mind."

He told me his name was Barton and that he was a professor of literature somewhere. His *fiancée* and her mother were fond of tobogganing, an exercise for which he had no great affection; the thaw gave him a chance of getting on with some indoor work. A young woman called to him from the corridor to come in for breakfast, and he went like a shot.

"I can only say again," remarked Mander over coffee and rolls and honey, "that I extremely regret the occurrence, and if you three

will but give me a little time to think it over, I rather fancy I may be able to organize something in the nature of a lark as compensation."

"All very well for you," said one of our party. "Your girl is arriving at mid-day." Professor Barton rose from his table close by with the two ladies and nodded to me as he left. "Who is the soft-headed-looking man? If Mander is going to arrange anything in the shape of a practical joke, that chap might come in useful."

Every writing-table was captured before any of our party could get possession of a pen. We went into the ballroom and monkeyed about for a while, but the maids came to polish the floor in preparation for a dance to take place that evening, and we had to turn out. The billiard-room was occupied by some old Scotch gentlemen who perhaps knew all about curling, but in regard to this game seemed doubtful about which end of the cue they ought to hold. We failed at Mander.

"Stop!" he cried, holding up his hand. "At lunch-time I can promise you the biggest fun you ever encountered in all your lives."

"At whose expense?" I asked.

"It won't cost us anything."

"I mean, who is to suffer?"

"Not you," replied Mander reassuringly. "All you'll have to do is to sit and look on." He threw his head back and went to and fro in the rocking-chair with something like ecstacy. "An inspiration," he declared. "Nothing less."

Lunch was the next, and the only immediate incident to look forward to; Mander, as I have hinted, had the 1.30 train to meet. The meal started before the new guests arrived, and we were nearly half-way through when Mander and Miss Yardley and her brother came in; they took a separate table because there was no room at the long table, and we noticed they were talking eagerly. To tell the truth, we did not regard her arrival with perfect satisfaction, for it meant, as we knew, taking Mander away from us. Mander had his faults, as the best of us have, but he was a great organizer. Any member of the Wine Trade Club will confirm this opinion.

It was out in the hall, as most of the people were taking coffee, that we discovered Mander intended to be as good as his word. Miss Yardley came down the steps from the corridor and looked

around ; we were about to go forward to meet her when she caught sight of my new acquaintance. Miss Yardley clutched at her blouse, seemed about to collapse, and then with an effort recovered and walked firmly across to his wicker chair.

"Sir," she said in a deep impressive voice, "men at some time are masters of their fates."

"Julius Cæsar !" ejaculated Barton. His *fiancée* told him not to use coarse language.

"But not always," went on Mander's sweetheart, speaking more loudly. "You little thought that we should meet again, and in such circumstances. Thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges."

"Twelfth Night !" remarked Barton.

"Ah, you do remember then ?" she cried. "The fifth of January at Kensington Town Hall. That last dance together. Heavens ! how I have suffered since then."

"What does this mean, Henry ?" demanded Barton's companion. "Something has been kept back from me. I insist upon knowing all."

"My dear," said Barton, "let the lady finish what she has to say."

There was perfect silence now in the hall. General conversation had stopped, and the desire appeared to be to listen eagerly and at the same time affect to be indifferent. 'Mander came to the steps and looked on.

"Pray continue," urged Barton, rising, "and take my chair."

"Remain where you are," she ordered, pointing a finger at him dramatically. "And tell me first of all, is this woman your affianced wife?"

"That is a fair description," he admitted.

"And are you going to deny in her presence," continued Mander's girl, "that you and I were at one time all in all to each other? Do you intend to allege that you did not throw me away as one discards an old glove? Can you look at me and declare that you have treated me fairly? Oh, what a piece of work is man!" she cried bitterly. "How noble in reason, how infinite in——"

"Henry," interrupted the other lady agonizedly, "tell me at once. Is this true?"

"Since you put the question," said Barton, "I suppose I am bound to answer it. I ought to have told you about it before, Alice. It was

not right of me to keep back the circumstances. I confess all. Now go upstairs to your mother's room and tell her, and take her advice. As for you," turning to Mander's girl, "I frankly admit that I owe reparation. We will discuss the matter quietly."

The young chaplain of the hotel, a very good fellow, went forward with, evidently some idea of making peace.

"No, no," she stammered. She glanced around in the direction of Mander for assistance, but he seemed unable to move. She went in a dazed way to the steps and disappeared; Mander followed. The guests gave an "Ah!" of satisfaction at this break in what had threatened to prove a monotonous day, and began to discuss the matter in low eager tones. Professor Barton instructed the waiter to bring a cigar, and leaning back took some proofs from his pocket and started on the work of correcting them. We three stared at each other.

"Where does the joke come in?" I asked.

"My opinion," said one, "is that it isn't coming in. I believe it's gone wrong."

"In that case," I said, "this is not one of

Mander's successes." They suggested we should go and find him. "No," I decided. "It's his show, and our best plan will be to abstain from interfering. Personally I am against practical jokes of all descriptions—unless, that is, they go off well."

Mander came from the corridor and beckoned. "For goodness sake," he, whispered agitatedly, "come and talk to her and cheer her up. I don't seem to be able to do anything, and her brother is as difficult as she is."

Miss Yardley's mood appeared to have changed. The idea had occurred to her that Mander perhaps believed the remarks made by the professor, and she was now in a greater state of anxiety than before ; it took Mander, with my fervent support, quite fifteen minutes to persuade her to give up this attitude. As I pointed out, the long arm of coincidence could not possibly be so lengthy as this ; besides, she would not have gone on with the pleasantry if she and the professor had ever met. "It seemed such a lark," she said despondently, "when Mr. Mander suggested it to me. I thought it would make a capital story to tell them about when we start rehearsing for our spring performance."

"You did it well," I declared. "Rather too many Shakespearean quotations, but otherwise you played your part excellently. No one could have anticipated that the little man would spoil it all."

"What I can't understand," said Mander perplexedly, "is why he did so."

"Unless he wanted an excuse to break off his engagement," suggested Miss Yardley's young brother. "In which case you chaps have simply played right into his hand. Another time, Mary," addressing his sister, "don't mix yourself in a matter of this kind without first consulting me. So far as I can see, my best plan will be to take you back, or send you back, to London by the next train." The others protested volubly.

"Give me ten minutes," I said, "and maybe I shall be able to put it right for you."

In the corridor Barton was examining through his glasses the cancelled notices on the board. His sweetheart and her mother were at the moment descending the staircase, and I waited to see what would happen. The girl advanced on tip-toe and put her hands on his shoulders.

"I have told mother, Henry dear," she said, "and her advice is that we at once pack up and get away."

"A good notion," he agreed.

"Excuse me," I remarked, stepping forward, "but can you tell me, Professor Barton, the name of the lady who was speaking to you just now in the hall?"

"The lady," he replied, looking at me just over his spectacles, "is apparently connected with your party, and if the information is not in your possession you can easily obtain it."

"This is no moment for evasiveness." It seemed to me that I had got my ingenious friend into a corner.

"Her name is Miss Yardley."

"Thank you," I said. "May I ask for five minutes' private conversation?"

"Mother proposes," remarked the girl to him, "that we three should go on to Beatenberg by the afternoon train. It appears there's plenty of snow there. Our trunks are ready."

"I'll go and pack," he promised readily, "so soon as I have listened to what this gentleman has to say."

I took him into the large empty dining-room, made him sit down, drew up a chair. I put the whole matter frankly and fairly. I admitted the possibility that he would consult the register book in the office had not occurred to me, and I agreed my question was in consequence a failure. Finally, I asked him to tell me why he had accepted the situation so calmly; why he had not instantly denied Miss Yardley's accusations.

"I had a good reason."

"Quite so, quite so. But I want you to tell it to me. I'm curious to know. We're both men of the world."

"No," he interrupted. "You may be, but, as a matter of fact, I am not. I don't mind telling you though, as we are on the point of going away, that their grievance against me has been"—here he gave a jerk of his head in the direction of the corridor—"that I am without the experiences an ordinary man of my age has undergone. Nothing could have happened better. Tell your friends, please, from me that I shall never forget their kindness."

Miss Yardley broke off her engagement with

Mander, and became friendly with the young chaplain. Mander told me at Basle, on the way home, that he did not intend to organize another winter party to Switzerland.

THE CITY MAN IN '60

MR. JAMES BECKETT shaved with the best of his four razors, and, in going to the fringe of hair that he allowed to grow under his chin, was so fortunate as to cut himself but once. Mrs. Beckett, hearing the familiar ejaculation, ran down to the cellar and brought with great care a small piece of cobweb, to be placed on the injured spot. He combed forward side whiskers, and, in using the brush, saw—by aid of a hand mirror—that the parting at the back of his head was straight and accurate.

“Your slippers are just inside the door, dear.”

Mr. Beckett answered his wife's announcement with a slight clearing of the voice that was not intended as an expression of thanks, but only as a sign that he comprehended. The slippers had been presented to him on his latest birthday by the two daughters (a trying occasion, when he had to be good-tempered in the morning); they were ornamented with beads worked in the pattern

of Prince of Wales's feathers, and he had kissed the girls and told them—to their considerable relief—that nothing could have been more suitable, or in better taste. In, them, and shirt-sleeved, he now padded down the staircase and to the hall, where he took from a peg an alpaca jacket and a smoking-cap, worn in hours of ease ; the little housemaid was engaged there, and, catching sight of him, dropped a curtsy, and taking her brush and dust-pan flew to the kitchen.

“ Where are the children, Maria ? ”

“ They are out on the croquet lawn, dear.”

“ No business to be out on the croquet lawn,” he retorted. “ Morning dew most dangerous. Cold strikes upwards, and result is——” He dismissed the idea of giving a lecture on health. “ Tell them I’m down.” He sat at the head of the large long table that had, at the other end, the protection of shining American cloth on a space where the tray was to stand. The *Daily Telegraph* (Mr. Beckett prided himself on being well in the forefront of political thought) hung over a chair, with some idea of drying itself in front of the fireplace ; the time being June, the

stove was filled with a kind of gilded string, and an elegant fall of parti-coloured paper ribbons hung upon a hook. Mr. Beckett pointed as his wife was leaving the room, and she came back hurriedly to transfer the journal from its resting-place to the table. An ormolu clock on the black marble mantelpiece struck, in deep tones, the hour.

"Morning, papa!" A respectful chorus of voices.

"Eight o'clock," he said precisely, "is the time appointed for the breakfast meal. Not three minutes past. Say grace, one of you."

The housemaid, entering, arrested herself, and drooped eyes, as the boy of the family, in a tone of voice only used on these occasions, said "For what are about receive, Lord make truly thankful." They all murmured "Amen" and a very brief pause ensued.

"Now then," remarked Mr. Beckett, turning to the maid, "bustle up. Don't stand there all day."

He took charge of the distribution of ham and eggs, not because he liked the task, but because it was his duty as the one responsible for providing

the feast ; he set apart one or two slices that recommended themselves to his taste. A large breakfast cup of tea was handed down from the opposite end. " Let me know, dear," begged his wife, " if it's not to your liking." The sound he made in reply to this hinted that he would most certainly not fail to register a complaint, if he found it necessary. The newspaper was propped against a glass sugar-basin, and the family waited, deferentially, for the usual scraps of information, together with comments.

" Great Heavens ! " he cried. " Good gracious ! " They turned heads in his direction. " This is extraordinary."

One of the rules of the household was that no one should speak when the mouth happened to be occupied with food, but from this regulation—as from several others—Mr. Beckett reckoned himself exempt.

" Twenty thousand," he exclaimed. " Twenty thousand. Now I wonder what our friends on the Continent will say to that ? Twenty thousand ! " His family knew better than to offer any remark. " I always said the idea would succeed, if it was only properly carried out. But twenty

thousand ! And apparently Her Majesty"—the children glanced up at the portraits of Queen Victoria and her Consort as though expecting them to bow—"Her Majesty is going to Edinburgh in August to do the same thing there." He turned suddenly on the boy. "What country is Edinburgh the capital of?" he asked sharply.

"Scotland," his mother whispered. "Scotland, if you please, papa," he amended.

"Ah," said Mr. Beckett, disappointed, "that was a guess, my lad. Your school doesn't pay nearly enough attention to necessary knowledge. I must see the headmaster about it. Education is going all on the wrong lines. Where is Canton?" The boy answered quickly and correctly: his father gave up the attempt to floor him. The boy ventured to inquire whether the *Great Eastern* had reached New York, and was reminded by the entire strength of the family that children should only speak when first addressed.

"Mamma," said Mr. Beckett to his wife, "he must join them later on."

"Beg your pardon, dear?"

"I repeat," with a ~~division~~ between each word,

so that the meanest intelligence, should understand, "he must join them later on."

"But join what, dear?"

Mr. Beckett, with a gesture, sent the newspaper on the carpet: the two daughters competed for the honour of recovering it. "Haven't you been listening? Don't you know what I've been talking about for the last quarter of an hour? Are you deaf?"

Mrs. Beckett shook her head.

"For fifteen minutes by the clock,"—he pointed to the mantelpiece for verification—"I've been telling you about the tremendous review held by Her Majesty in Hyde Park yesterday. Twenty thousand men there. King of the Belgians, Princess Alice, and Prince Arthur present. Volunteers, mind you. I've always argued that one volunteer was worth half a dozen pressed men. Now, do you understand?"

"Yes, "dear," she replied, "I understand now."

Breakfast over, and thanks for the meal having been given to One above, Mr. Beckett offered a few criticisms on it, and complained that two eggs remained uneaten; he mentioned that those

who wasted invariably came to want. Standing upon the hearthrug that presented a vivid representation of a red lion and a purple tiger, he returned to the question of defence of our native shores, and delivered an address upon the subject, his family giving their best attention.

The maid, trembling visibly at the commanding tone of his voice, removed articles on the table ; substituted for the white cloth one of vivid scarlet, and, with respect, brought his elastic-side boots : he sat upon the horsehair sofa, and with groans and other signs of irritation and pain, pulled them on. Mrs. Beckett sent the three children out of the room quietly, and herself remained within call. He consulted a watch of good size, and asked why the breakfast-room clock was a minute and a half fast ; his wife apologized, and promised the matter should be seen to. She assisted him with his frock coat. The elder girl brought a large white rose and a pin, and Mr. Beckett showed amiability as it was fixed in the buttonhole : he pinched the girl's ear, declared she was becoming quite a woman, and gave the smoking-cap into her charge.

"James, dear," said his wife, "you won't

forget that we are asking in a few friends to-night."

His black bag was ready in the hall. The umbrella stood in its proper place. His silk hat, narrow-brimmed and flat-brimmed, was upon the right peg. The morning journal had been re-folded. These articles he collected, and giving a casually directed kiss to his wife, and a sharp call of farewell to the young people, he hurried away.

The omnibus, with three horses, was waiting outside *The Jolly Cricketers* tavern, and Mr. Beckett slackened speed. Other City men were making for the same objective, some older than he, a few younger—Mr. Beckett often referred to himself as being in the prime of life—and clear of his family he took a more genial expression of features, and by the time he reached the conveyance, presented an aspect almost jovial. He responded to the touch of the hat given by the driver and conductor, 'agreed' with them that the day was likely to be warm. Mr. Beckett had some right to one of the seats next the driver, but these were already taken by two youths who smoked cigars, and ignored the look he gave :

the conductor held his bag, and Mr. Beckett climbed the upright ladder at the back of the omnibus, took a place on the side of the knifeboard where the sun would not stare into his eyes.

"Well, Charles, well," he said to the conductor, who had followed with the bag, "who are we waiting for, eh?"

"Rightly speaking, sir, there's three of 'em, but young Mr. Ruggles is the one that counts. There'd be the deuce and all to pay if we went off without young Mr. Ruggles."

"Ruggles," said a passenger over his shoulder, "has done well lately, I hear, over sugar."

Back to back, they discussed the matter and agreed that youth, nowadays, was in too great a hurry.

Tardy passengers arrived, and one brought news that Ruggles was taking a day off, in order to prepare for a special engagement; information that caused the conductor to remove the block from under the wheels, and shout "Soon as you like now, 'Arry," and the horses went, the landlord of *The Jolly Cricketers* waving a good-bye. In Cold Harbour Road the conductor

sounded his horn, and the omnibus stopped for three more passengers, who complained of the age of the straw inside the conveyance; from here the journey became express, passing more leisurely traffic, and coming out at Camberwell Green, taking Walworth Road, passing the Elephant, and making for the Borough in good style. A few alighted in High Street; Mr. Beckett went over the bridge, and descended near the Monument. The whole course had taken, he found on reference to his watch, less than an hour, and he congratulated the driver, patted one of the steaming horses, calling it a good boy.

His offices were on the second floor of an old house in St. Mary Axe, reputed to have been, in the past, the dwelling of a foreign ambassador, and still possessing some indications of superior birth in coats of arms, modelled in dark wood, with elaborate ironwork at the staircases. Also the windows were small, and the panes framed in lead, keeping the sunlight out in a manner more suited to the diplomatic profession than to the corn business. The firm dated back to a remote period, and, as a consequence, Mr. Beckett's own name did not appear on the doors,

but everybody knew he represented the house, and if they did not know, it was no fault of his. Murmur of conversation in the outer offices ceased as he entered.

"Morning, gentlemen."

"Good-morning, sir."

"Where's Pycraft?"

The senior clerk came from the inner room, the door of which was marked "Private." He rubbed his hands and bowed; gave an apology on behalf of the absent member of the staff.

"When he comes," ordered Mr. Beckett sharply, "send him in to me, Mr. Harley, at once. At once: d'you hear?"

The post letters were neatly arranged on the shining mahogany table, foreign dispatches uppermost, and Mr. Beckett, without removing his hat, applied himself to those that concerned business, and were signed by Mr. Beckett's humble, obedient servants. Certain of the communications made him frown, and he sent for Harley; heated discussions ensued. An important envelope contained a card that restored good temper. The Master and Wardens of the Worshipful Company of Limners requested the honour of the company

of James W. Beckett, Esq., at Dinner to meet the Right Hon. The Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs of London. In another envelope, even more important in appearance, the Duke of Oxford conveyed the information that he had been requested to take the Chair at the forthcoming Anniversary Dinner (particulars enclosed) and hoped he could count upon Mr. Beckett's support on that occasion. His Grace, in a very friendly letter, mentioned that a donation from Mr. Beckett of Five Guineas would constitute him a Steward, but this did not include the price of the Dinner, which had been fixed at Twenty Five shillings, without Wine. In a personal touch, the Duke expressed the earnest hope that the gentleman he was addressing was in the Enjoyment of good Health, "a Boon denied to those on whose behalf I am venturing to make this Appeal." Mr. Beckett unlocked a drawer and took out his cheque-book. He could have been described, not only upon a tombstone, but in places where truth was expected, as a kindly-hearted man, but his charity had strict limitations. His general idea of hard-up people was that they deserved to be hard up, and "the more you do

for 'em, the more 'you may." To crossing-sweepers he sometimes gave coppers, but this was in return for services given ; besides, several members of the profession had been through the Crimean War. Mrs. Beckett assisted three families down in her neighbourhood, and the two girls often made some article useful for the wear of the benighted heathen. Mr. Beckett never thought of going eastward of Aldgate Pump, excepting for the purpose of visiting the dock on business ; he had a lingering suspicion that it would be wise to arrest, and keep in the Model Prison, all who could not earn a competency ; any case, reported in the journals, headed " A Tender-Hearted Magistrate " met with his severest condemnation. More than once, in his dreams, he had been garrotted by a couple of scoundrels, and his watch and purse stolen.

" Young Pycraft has arrived, sir."

" Tell him to wait until I am ready to see him."

This was one of the methods favoured by authority at the time, and, I am informed, not yet extinct. Mr. Beckett had dealt with his post letters, had given instructions regarding them ; there was nothing for him to do until he

strolled across to the Corn Exchange in Mark Lane; but he fussed with papers on the table pretending to be greatly engaged, the while Pycraft stood in the outer office rather like a schoolboy awaiting punishment.

"Now, young man, what have you to say to yourself about all this coming late, and neglecting your duties, and goodness knows what all?" The amateur might have assumed that, an explanation being asked for, this was the moment for an explanation to be given; Pycraft knew his place, and remained silent. "You appear to be under the impression that you can play fast and loose; let me tell you, sir, that you are mistaken. I granted you, at your special request, a holiday yesterday, and I can imagine, from your late arrival this morning, how you spent it. You stayed in bed until noon; when you went out your first visit was to one of these flaring gin-palaces that are such an unmitigated curse to the Metropolis; from there you staggered——"

Young Pycraft listened with proper respect, as his superior drew the detailed picture. Mr. Beckett took the ebony ruler to emphasize comments, and having finished, with a slighting

reference to Crémorne, brought it down on the table in a startling way, and shouted, " Now, sir ! I have made up my mind how to deal with you, but I am quite willing to hear anything you have to say." He felt that no Alderman, sitting to dispense justice at the Mansion House, could have made a fairer offer.

Young Pycraft ~~was~~ sorry, but the fact ~~was~~ he had overslept.

" Are you aware, sir, that I am out of bed, winter and summer, by half-past seven ? "

Young Pycraft, bowing in grateful acknowledgment of the information, pleaded that, as a volunteer, he had attended the review the day before. It was a tiring day ; late before he managed to get to rest. He slept—so Pycraft described it—like a log of wood. •

" A very good simile," said Mr. Beckett, with a slight relaxation of features. " A log of wood. Now, we don't want logs of wood in St. Mary Axe. We want men. • You will be paid up to the day before yesterday, and the firm will endeavour to get on, as best it can, without your services. Good-day to you, sir."

Mr. Beckett, as the youth went, stroked his

upper lip and chin with an open hand, and going to look at his reflection in the mirror, assured himself that he had behaved with dignity, force, and decision. "A set of incompetent young rascals," he remarked. By this phrase, he referred to all members of the staff, and, indeed, to all workers in the City, under the age of twenty-five.

At the Exchange, where he found that wheat was 57/7, barley 33/6, and oats 26/8, he was assailed by other members concerning the question of lunch, a subject to which he brought his best attention. A new place had been opened, it appeared, in Leadenhall Street, and a daring proposal of an experiment was made that Mr. Beckett declined to entertain. What guarantee, he demanded, was there that a good chop or steak could be obtained there? Was there, or could there possibly be, any assurance concerning the wine? He ventured to say that the new establishment would, in all probability, attempt to introduce a foreign style, presenting dishes that no one recognized, and calculated to play the very deuce with one's digestive powers. "I can't afford," he declared frankly, "to tamper

with my health!" Some matters of less importance regarding Garibaldi's successes and a murder in Walworth were discussed. The silk-hatted gentlemen differed on many subjects, but they agreed that there were no longer any profits to be made in the corn business. Some blamed Mr. Cobden, others were inclined to censure Mr. Bright. It was an off day—Thursday—and no great pressure of work existed.

At one o'clock precisely Mr. Beckett, with the solemnity of a man approaching an important rite, went up a passage off Fenchurch Street, entered a door on the left, and found himself in the presence of a white-aproned man cook, a large grill, a red-hot fire, and a well-selected group of raw meat. He made his choice, entered the dining-room, took his usual place near the window, and the waiter brought a basket of household bread. All the patrons retained their headgear, and, despite the heat, windows were closed; it is doubtful whether they were ever opened. A few gestures, in salutation, and Mr. Beckett adjusted his table napkin; studied the fly-blown wine list with as much interest as though it possessed the charm of novelty.

"Yes, Robert," he decided. "As you say, a bottle of the usual."

You see Mr. Beckett, at this hour, at his best. Having done a good, sound morning's work, he had earned the right to a good, sound meal; he told himself that more than one City man had come to an untimely end by not taking care of himself. The large steak came, and Robert the waiter said, confidently, that he thought it would prove difficult to find fault with it. Robert brought potatoes in their jackets, a square slab of cabbage on a silver plate. The wine came in a cradle, as though it were extremely youthful instead of being of a ripe age, and poured out, showed itself of good colour; passed with honours, the test of being moved, to and fro, under the nose. At the first sip, Mr. Beckett became cheerful, more animated in appearance. One or two customers, on entering, called to him cheerily as "Jimmie," and he responded: his neighbour, who had arrived at the apple-pudding stage, inquired whether anything had been heard of poor old Crayford, and Mr. Beckett was able to reply that Crayford was on his last legs. They speculated on the amount Crayford would leave, and to whom he would leave it.

"Not too warm for a glass of port, is it?" inquired the neighbour hopefully. By slackening the pace, he had arranged for a dead heat with the Stilton.

"I ought not to take it," said Mr. Beckett. And began to describe some trouble with joints.

"As well be hung for a sheep as a lamb," declared the neighbour. "Robert, a small bottle of—you know what."

Our City man found, on leaving, that the world appeared a good deal brighter and better than he had previously imagined. He smiled at it until, discovering himself near to the Minorities, it occurred to him that he had taken a wrong direction, and even this unusual blunder was viewed with a certain tolerance: he said his mind was occupied with other subjects. On the way to his office, he encountered a boy singing a comic song:

"I wish I was with Nancy,
I do, I do,
On a second floor, for evermore
I'd live and die with Nancy"—

and Mr. Beckett, humming the air, considered it engaging and tuneful.

"A lady to see you, sir."

"What name?"

"I have an idea, sir, that she is young Pycraft's sister."

"How these people do worry one, to be sure! They might know that once I've made up my mind——"

Miss Pycraft, entering the inner room with very proper confusion, bowed and apologized for the intrusion: Mr. Beckett surveyed her steadily. The girl was dressed in the fashion not quite of '60, but of a few years earlier: tartan plaid skirts, well flounced and extended, and a Zouave jacket; her bonnet had green roses, and sat rather prettily upon her carefully crimped black hair. Miss Pycraft, after some difficulty in calling up powers of speech, got well under way, and talked volubly. A dressmaker, it appeared, in Theobald's Road: Arthur—her brother—and she were the only supports and props of an aged mother, who, without them, would collapse. Arthur had come home at midday with news of the unexpected disaster; his efforts to find a fresh situation had, up to that hour, been without results.

"Of course, of course," said Mr. Beckett.
"What did he expect?"

Miss Pycraft, greatly perturbed, resolved, so soon as her brother had gone out again, to take a step that many, she feared, might consider unmaidenly, perhaps almost mannish.

"Now, now," as the young woman found her handkerchief. "You mustn't mind too much what people say. Compose yourself, and—by the bye, you may like to sit down."

Miss Pycraft replied with gratitude and propriety that she knew her position in life better than to dare to accept the offer. The fact was that Arthur had so often spoken of Mr. Beckett's generous temperament, his kindness to the clerks, his high reputation in the City—"He thinks the world of you, sir!"—that she, Miss Pycraft, determined to come along, inside an omnibus, not grudging the sixpence involved or the bumping journey down and up through Holborn, in order to appeal to Mr. Beckett, and urge him to give her brother one more chance.

"He's had his lesson, sir, and he's not likely to forget it, and I'm certain he'll remember your clemency, sir, to the last day of his life." (A wise young woman, Miss Pycraft, in thus attempting no defence, but throwing her case upon the

mercy of the Court ; I think she would have done well, but for prejudices of the page, at the Bar.)

“ My dear young lady ! ” Mr. Beckett made a pyramid with his hands and spoke across it, in a fatherly manner. “ Women-folk know nothing of City life, and it is my fervent wish they should never do so. I have often said that the moment your sex comes into anything like a business career, I go out of it. I can’t imagine that it will ever happen. What you don’t understand is that here discipline has to be maintained.”

The bonnet was so emphatic in agreeing with this view that with the aid of a glance at the mirror it had to be re-adjusted.

“ Discipline must be maintained, and it is impossible for those of us in authority to go back upon what we have said.” The handkerchief was again found. “ Wait a bit, wait a bit. I am not prepared to say that all the instances of what I may term rebellion to law and order are of the same quality. Insubordination has many varieties, and the case of your brother is, perhaps, not so serious as it might have been. At any rate, I am inclined to recollect that, in the

words of our immortal Bard, the quality of justice is not strained."

Miss Pycraft again showed fitness for public life by arresting herself from making a correction.

"Not strained," repeated Mr. Beckett. "It falleth as the so on and so forth. And I have to announce to you, that if your brother makes a suitable and adequate apology to me for his behaviour, he can resume his duties here to-morrow morning."

Miss Pycraft, promising to request Heaven to bless Mr. Beckett, left. The City man leaned back in his padded chair, glowing with self-content and reviewing the incident complacently. "Rather a nice-looking girl, too," he remarked.

He had to be aroused from his doze, because two men in the trade had called: he explained to his senior clerk that the mere closing of eyes was a great restorative when one suffered from overwork. The fresh interview over, he signed letters that were brought to him, using a quill pen which had been cut to the point that suited him. At ten minutes to five o'clock he washed hands, and in going to catch his omnibus in Gracechurch Street, issued a general warning

that no member of the staff was to leave until work was completely finished.

His daughters kissed him when he arrived at the house : they knew marks of affection were welcome to him when he had done with the day's traffic. The elder girl expressed the hope that papa was not tired ; hinted a fear that he might be disinclined for the stress and turmoil of a party.

" Life in the old dog yet," he declared genially. " But bless my soul, my dear, how smart you look in your muslin dress, and your new crinoline. This means "—he gave a waggish look—" this undoubtedly means that some one special is expected."

" Oh, papa."

" It's all right," he said comfortingly ; " I can't expect to keep you in the old nest for ever. Make the most of your opportunities. Marry young and marry often."

The news went about the house that Mr. Beckett was in admirable fettle : his last quip found its way downstairs and was well received by the cook and the housemaid. " The things the master says ! " ejaculated cook amusedly.

Mr. Albert Ruggles came in good time for dinner, and was conducted to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Beckett received him graciously, and the elder girl—who had shown a considerable amount of restlessness as half-past six approached—became flushed at a moment when she particularly desired to look pale and interesting. The drawing-room was well crowded with furniture, and the mantelpiece had no empty spaces; walls were covered with oil paintings, and the general impression in the household was that many of these might, if only kept long enough, prove to be of value. Mr. Ruggles, a spruce, well set-up youth, conducted himself admirably in a trying situation, and talked on the few subjects considered to be within the female range: he was acquainted with all that went on in London, and spoke of Mr. Paul Bedford, pictures at the Academy by Mr. Egg, Mr. Tupper's new book of sonnets. The younger girl and the boy entered and Ruggles discussed with the latter the question of round-arm bowling, coupled with the name of Willsher of Kent. The coming in of Mr. Beckett checked conversation; the elder girl noticed, with relief, that papa was still in excellent temper, and

that he shook hands heartily with Mr. Ruggles ; assured the young man no extra charge was made for seats, and forced him into the largest arm-chair. Young Ruggles inquired whether Mr. Beckett had endured a tiring day, and the host replied that he had been at it for seven mortal hours, with scarcely a second to himself. Ruggles declared that City life was uncommonly wearing and tearing to the constitution, more perhaps in corn than in sugar : the other said it was not so much a matter of constitution as a question of mental strain : his medical man had often said to him : " Eat what you like, Mr. Beckett, and drink what you like, but take care not to overtax the mind." Ruggles, with a fervent air, hoped Mr. Beckett was following out this wise counsel, urging him to recollect that good men were scarce ; the host said he did his best, and no one could do more. Dinner was announced, and Ruggles offered his arm to Mrs. Beckett.

It was a meal that appeared to assume food had not been previously offered during the day, and Mr. Beckett, in carving the large joint of roast beef, ignored the protest of his daughters — " Oh, papa, you have given me a lot ! " Gravy,

red and warm, was spooned from the dish, and more gravy was poured over each plate; Mr. Beckett told a story communicated to him by a mustard manufacturer. All hands being set to work, Mrs. Beckett prompted her husband, and furnished him with cues—

“What is that story of yours, dear, about a Member of Parliament out hunting?”

And Mr. Beckett, prefacing each anecdote with the hedging phrase of “Expect our friend Ruggles has heard it,” gave several from his repertory, and the young man (Heaven forgive him!) declared that each was, to him, new, and fresh, and novel. Ruggles felt it necessary to show a spirit of reciprocity, but the host proved more admirable in recounting than in listening, and a glance from the elder girl stopped the visitor from pursuing his intention. A pudding followed made of slices of sponge-cakes and layers of jam, set in a pond of thick custard, the whole vehemently flavoured with sherry. Cheese, fruit—

“—From my own garden, Ruggles. At the next house, they can't grow anything like these cherries. Help yourselves to claret, and pass the decanter along.”

And the children are taken upstairs by Mrs. Beckett. Elder daughter, at the doorway, seems to have some thoughts of swooning, but reconsiders the matter, and door closes without any perturbing incident. Just as well this, for young Ruggles is about to set out on a daring expedition wherein anything may happen: he grips the nut-crackers as the only arm of defence with which he can furnish himself.

"Sir, I—I want to ask you a question."

"Ruggles," says Mr. Beckett encouragingly, "proceed!"

"Mr. Beckett," rushing into the thick of the forest, "I love your elder daughter, and wish you to allow me to pay my attention to her."

Mr. Beckett rises, and goes to the hearthrug, the platform from which he is accustomed to make his speeches in the house. Sends hands deep into plaid trousers pockets; shakes his head. "Have you said anything to my child about this?"

"Not a word, sir." Ruggles ought to give signs of confusion, but omits them.

"Now I'm a business man," says Mr. Beckett deliberately, "and my habits are business-like.

What—putting it at the lowest figure—is the income you can reckon upon ? ”

“ At the lowest figure, six hundred a year. At the highest, in view of some success I’ve had recently——”

“ My lad,” he interrupts, “ it will break my heart to lose her, and her mother will, I fear, never be the same again. But I see that this is a case of true love, and all I say is—go in and win ! ”

The evening party began at eight, and lasted until eleven. A dozen young people came, and there was music, with the now engaged Miss Beckett playing a piece on the harp, and very properly breaking down half-way through, necessitating the production of fans and of smelling-salts ; every one said “ Poor dear, what can you expect ! ” and Ruggles tried to look as though he were not responsible. Miss Beckett recovered sufficiently to accompany him with two songs by the Honourable Mrs. Norton. The boy, allowed, as a special concession, to stay up, was nearly induced to give an imitation of Mr. Albert Smith, but not quite. One of the visitors performed a clever trick with a fourpenny-bit and a glass of

water ; no one could understand how it was done, excepting Mr. Beckett, who announced that it was merely legerdemain. A father came for two of the girl guests, and Mr. Beckett took him off to the study, to taste some of the best that money could buy, and to smoke one of the finest ingenuity was able to select. Young Ruggles had to go, and the elder Miss Beckett went downstairs to assist him in the arduous task of fixing his hat.

At a quarter past eleven o'clock, the City man, in slippers, was alone with his wife, who, to keep him company, took a very small glass of home-made wine.

"Well, my dear," he said jovially, "that gets rid of one of them."

"Yes, James," she said. "And I only hope our girl will be as happy in her married life as her mother has been."

With some discomposure of manner, Mr. Beckett urged his wife not to be a fool.

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